Recent highlights towards better nutrition and healthy diets for all
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FOREWORD

It is my pleasure to present this document highlighting the work in nutrition the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) carried out in 2022 and beyond.

FAO’s Strategic Framework 2022–2031\(^1\) outlines the Organization’s commitment to transforming agrifood systems to achieve better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life – leaving no one behind. These four betters are the organising principle for how FAO is directly contributing to the 2030 Agenda.

Achieving better nutrition is critical, not only because it will contribute to reaching several of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but also because not a single country in the world is on track to meet nutrition targets. With FAO’s experience and expertise across agrifood systems – from ecosystem inputs all the way to the consumption and disposal of food – there are many opportunities to support healthy diets, and thus better nutrition, across all areas of the Organization’s work.

While this short overview offers highlights from some of FAO’s activities and achievements in nutrition in 2022, it also presents opportunities and ways to strengthen our actions to achieve better nutrition in the future. As such, it commits us to keep going until we have achieved our vision of a world where all people eat healthy diets from efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable agrifood systems.

Lynnette Neufeld
Director
Food and Nutrition Division, FAO

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The nutrition team would like to thank all FAO staff, partner organizations, government officials, farmers and communities for their contributions to FAO’s work in nutrition. Input from a range of sectors has informed our work, which is a testament to the cross-cutting nature of nutrition. Your contributions are invaluable towards our mission to achieve better nutrition for all, and we look forward to continuing to work together towards this goal.

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INTRODUCTION

In the final decade of Agenda 2030 for reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as many as 735 million people face hunger, 148 million children under 5 years old are stunted, 45 million children under 5 years old are wasted, and approximately 675 million adults are obese. Improving nutrition offers one of the greatest development opportunities in the world today. Better nutrition will make a difference to the lives of billions and is essential to achieving at least 12 of the 17 SDGs, including those relating to health, education, employment, gender equality, poverty, and peaceful and inclusive societies. Total economic gains to society of investing in nutrition could reach USD 5.7 trillion per year by 2030.

A major challenge to improving nutrition is the current inadequacy of diets. Across the world, people’s diets lack sufficient and diverse nutritious foods, and they often eat too many foods that are not nutritious. These kinds of diets lead to deficiencies and imbalances of energy and nutrients, impacting health, growth and development, causing various forms of malnutrition and ultimately undermining the economic development of nations.

Preventing malnutrition and related health and development impacts requires actions across many domains, for example hygiene and sanitation, education, health care during pregnancy and early childhood, poverty reduction, and women’s empowerment, among others. Healthy diets, however, are at the cornerstone of better nutrition. Healthy diets cannot be achieved without making changes to current agrifood systems.

FAO has stepped up to this challenge by placing better nutrition as one of four pillars of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–2031. To realize this ambition, FAO Members approved the Vision and Strategy for FAO’s Work in Nutrition, which sets out five interdependent action areas to guide the organization’s work in nutrition. This document provides a snapshot of FAO’s work in nutrition at global, regional and country levels in 2022 and beyond. Each chapter takes an action area and presents a quantitative overview from FAO Country Office reporting, and examples of activities, achievements and stories from the field that provide glimpses into FAO’s work in nutrition and what it can achieve. This is followed by progress to date in realising the implementation plan of the Vision and Strategy for FAO’s Work in Nutrition, which focuses on the needed organizational change including people, processes, and culture. Finally, the document closes with a reflection on how FAO will build on the work carried out in 2022 to achieve better nutrition and beyond by enabling healthy diets for all, leaving no one behind.

Figure 1: FAO’s five action areas for nutrition impact

CHAPTER 1: USING DATA TO ACHIEVE HEALTHY DIETS

FAO’s work on dietary and nutrition-related data at country level
In 2022, **110 FAO Country Offices (78 percent)** reported they supported countries on the collection, understanding, and use of data and metrics on nutrition-related topics. **103 FAO Country Offices (73 percent)** confirmed their support for the integration of dietary and nutrition-related data and analysis in the UN Common Country Analysis (UNCCA).

**DATA BOX 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of FAO Country Offices supporting countries on the use of data on nutrition related topics</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No/No Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>69% (86)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>79% (112)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>78% (110)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of FAO Country Offices ensuring integration of nutrition related data into UN Country Common Analysis</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No/No Response</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>57% (71)</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>76% (107)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>73% (103)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
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Notes: Data were collected through the FAO Country Annual Report and in alignment with the Accountability Framework indicators 1.1a and 1.2b of the Vision and Strategy for FAO’s Work in Nutrition. Source: Authors’ own elaboration of data from FAO’s country annual report.

Data are essential to ensure healthy diets for all, leaving no one behind

Dietary data, including information on what and how much people are eating and drinking, the food acquired at a household level, and food available in a country, are critical for developing informed policies and programs to support healthy diets.

For example, individual level food consumption data provide information about what and how much people are eating and drinking. Food composition data show exactly what that food and drink contains, for example protein, carbohydrates, fat, vitamins, and minerals, and in which amounts. When these data are combined, they can provide a picture of energy and nutrient intakes, including gaps or excesses across nations and populations, such as different age and gender groups.

Other data on factors that influence food choices and preferences, such as socio-cultural beliefs and practices, as well as agrifood systems data such as food production, trade and agriculture policy, food loss and waste, and food prices, are essential to understand the constraints and opportunities to achieve healthy diets, and design actions to address these. These data can be synthesized and used to guide priorities that allow governments, policymakers, the nutrition community, the food industry and all other stakeholders to make changes that enable healthy diets for all.
Dietary data in action

FAO/WHO Global Individual Food consumption data Tool (FAO/WHO GIFT)

FAO, in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO), is making great progress in informing the world about what we eat. FAO/WHO GIFT is a unique platform, developed by FAO, which holds and shares individual quantitative food consumption data – data about what and how much people eat and drink from countries around the world. These data are prepared and shared on FAO/WHO GIFT in collaboration with country counterparts.

The individual dietary intake data shared on FAO/WHO GIFT are fundamental to support informed decision-making processes at country, regional and global levels, to improve diets and nutrition. In 2022, FAO shared summaries of 320 dietary surveys. Of these, 36 also had complete databases shared through FAO/WHO GIFT. FAO also introduced several improvements to the platform structure and outputs based on user feedback. The improvements facilitated searching and data access, made the platform more user-friendly, and enabled users to easily see news and updates such as database releases or new reports.

FAO also made dietary data more accessible, understandable and relevant. In 2022, FAO published the Global report on the state of dietary data, together with the Intake Center for Dietary Assessment at FHI Solutions, and two articles in peer reviewed journals: Global trends in the availability of dietary data in low and middle-income countries and Open data sharing for dietary survey data. All three publications highlight the importance of dietary data and data sharing to achieve healthy diets and aim to improve the use of data, for example through stories and examples shared from countries.

Food composition

Food composition data provide information on the nutritional content of foods and drinks, essential to understand the nutritional adequacy of the foods that people eat. Food composition data permit the conversion of food intake (i.e. food consumption data) to nutrient intake, allowing for comparisons with recommended values.

For many years, FAO has been pivotal in making high-quality food composition data available. 2022 marked the 23rd year of FAO coordinating INFOODS, a worldwide network of food composition

DID YOU KNOW? Box 1

FAO/WHO GIFT is unique in allowing dietary data to be accessed by any user, anywhere in the world.

This innovative open-access platform was one of seven digital initiatives selected from nearly 500 that were submitted by 39 UN agencies to be presented at the Science, Technology and Innovation Forum in 2022 on the topic of how digital technologies play a crucial role in achieving the SDGs.

experts, which seeks to improve the quality, availability, reliability and use of food composition data, and acts as a medium through which international support for food composition activities can be achieved and advocated. The success of FAO’s coordination and commitment to leading global work on the development and update of food composition data was evident in INFOODS’ successful hosting of a symposium entitled *The critical role of food composition data in nutrition* at the International Congress of Nutrition, the largest global nutrition conference, held in Tokyo, Japan, in 2022.

Support to Saint Kitts and Nevis to collect, analyse and interpret dietary data

In collaboration with local partners, FAO conducted a food consumption survey in Saint Kitts and Nevis, the first of its kind in the Caribbean, using specialized software to collect data on dietary habits. The survey revealed that energy and nutrient intake were insufficient for adults between 18 and 65 years compared to recommended levels, emphasizing the need for further analysis. From 2021 to 2022, FAO launched further work to improve the understanding of the dietary data, employing various types of research such as interviews and focus groups. The work helped to understand and better interpret the results of the dietary survey and build capacities in the region that are fundamental to inform future policies and programmes in the area of nutrition and food safety.

“Lessons learned from the food consumption survey assessment in Saint Kitts and Nevis can strengthen the information available from food systems in the Caribbean region, by improving the accuracy of the information on what, how, and when people eat their diets. Working towards the provision of good quality food consumption information can also enable the linkage of such data with environmental indicators (e.g., low carbon footprint), which in turn can support food and agriculture policies.”

*Sandra Patricia Crispim, Adjunct Professor at Federal University of Paraná, Brazil.*

*Source: Communications with Sandra Patrícia Crispim, Adjunct Professor at Federal University of Paraná, Brazil.*
Territorial markets mapping

Using its methodology to map territorial markets, FAO, in partnership with local and national institutions, has been collecting and analysing data on territorial markets. These markets, both formal and informal, are the main point of access for fresh food for consumers in many low- and middle-income countries, in particular in rural areas and urban settlements. They also serve as the main point of sale for smallholder farmers who are responsible for most of the world’s food production. Data collected include (i) the diversity of the food on offer; (ii) women retailers’ inclusion in markets; (iii) the enabling business environment; (iv) the length of the supply chain; (v) the markets’

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Territorial markets are the diverse and domestic physical food markets (open-air wet markets, wholesale markets, urban food markets, etc.) that are embedded into a territorial food system, meaning that the vast majority of products on sale and actors involved in the market are from the same territory where the market is located.
contribution to healthy diets based on the share of products purchased daily in territorial markets by consumers in the sample and the share of consumers purchasing products from at least five different food groups, three of these being a staple food, an animal-source of protein and a fruit and vegetable. Such mapping can help identify barriers and potential facilitators to healthy diets and can inform needed policy and action.

In 2022, FAO analysed and published data on territorial markets from Burkina Faso, Ecuador, Kenya, Malawi, Paraguay, Rwanda, Senegal, and the United Republic of Tanzania. FAO also produced policy briefs with recommendations for territorial markets to improve women’s economic inclusion, sustainable agriculture and healthy diets. All data are available through FAO’s Hand-in-Hand Geospatial Platform.
Chapter 2: Using evidence to achieve healthy diets

Evidence is critical to inform actions to achieve healthy diets for all

Evidence related to agrifood systems actions, particularly in the face of climate change and shifting population needs due to migration and other factors, is vital to inform policies, actions, and investments. There is an urgent need to improve and consolidate evidence on what works to transform agrifood systems for healthy diets, with evidence of costs and potential trade-offs for healthy diets from sustainable agrifood systems. Such evidence must be used to reduce inefficiencies in agrifood systems, increase food availability, access, and diversity, and ensure healthy diets and a healthy planet.

Change requires a global effort. FAO is generating, compiling, and supporting the uptake and use of the evidence needed to make change happen, including emerging evidence on the co-benefits of policy and action for climate and nutrition for addressing national priorities jointly.

**FAO’s work on evidence for healthy diets and good nutrition at the country level**

- **74 percent** of FAO Country Offices (105) reported their support to governments to draw on knowledge products about **promising practices from across agrifood systems to enable healthy diets**.
- **74 percent** of Country Offices (104) confirmed the use of knowledge products by host governments to **analyse synergies and trade-offs associated with agrifood systems**.

**DATA BOX 2**

- **Number of FAO Countries Offices reporting that the country drew on knowledge products about promising practices to enable healthy diets**
  - 2021: 78% (110) Yes, 31 No/No Response
  - 2022: 74% (105) Yes, 36 No/No Response

- **Number of FAO Countries Offices reporting that the country made use of knowledge products developed by or with support from FAO**
  - 2021: 72% (101) Yes, 40 No/No Response
  - 2022: 74% (104) Yes, 37 No/No Response

Notes: Data were collected through the FAO Country Annual Report and in alignment with the Accountability Framework indicators 2.1a and 2.2a of the Vision and Strategy for FAO’s Work in Nutrition.

Source: Authors’ own elaboration of data from FAO’s country annual report.
The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) is a FAO flagship annual report that is jointly prepared by FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. It gives up-to-date information on progress towards ending hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition, provides in-depth analysis on key challenges and response options, and includes evidence-informed recommendations for achieving these goals in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In 2022, the evidence presented in the SOFI report showed that if governments repurpose the resources they are using to incentivize the production, supply and consumption of nutritious foods, they will contribute to making healthy diets less costly, and more affordable – sustainably and equitably for all.

The 2022 SOFI report showed that:

1. governments can achieve more with the same public resources;
2. most food and agricultural policy is inadvertently undermining food security and nutrition; and
3. policy support is not equitably distributed, is market distorting and environmentally harmful.

Evidence identifies success for better nutrition in Kenya

The Livestock for Health Program (L4H) in Kenya is funded by USAID and implemented by FAO in partnership with the Government of Kenya, UNICEF, Washington State University, and local NGOs. L4H provides livestock feed to households and some also received nutrition counselling during long periods of drought. Data on milk production at the household level, milk consumption patterns and undernutrition in women and children were then collected and compared between households that received one of two interventions and a control group. The study found benefits of the provision of livestock feed and that nutrition counselling influenced beneficiaries towards appropriate livestock feeding during critical shortage periods, the prioritization of providing milk to young children over selling it, and the adoption of adequate dietary diversity and self-hygiene practices of pastoralist communities in Kenya.


Scientific advice on dietary intake reference values

In 2022, FAO provided scientific advice on dietary intake reference values (DIRVs) to the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CODEX) Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses. The DIRVs are around protein and 24 vitamins and minerals for older infants and young children (aged 6 months to 3 years).
The first three years of life are a uniquely sensitive period of growth. Sub-optimal nutrition during this period of early life can profoundly influence a child’s development, as well as long-term health. The report prepared for CODEX assessed, categorized and ranked methods to derive DIRVs, and advised on suitable categories to establish nutrient reference values among this age group. Understanding the levels of nutrients children should eat is a critical step for building context-specific guidelines on healthy eating for children to grow and thrive. By providing technical expertise for evidence-informed decision-making such as with this report, FAO continues its commitment to support multilateral bodies such as the CODEX to develop standards, guidelines and codes of practice for safety, quality and fairness in international food trade.

**Sustainable public food procurement**

In 2022, FAO significantly contributed to the evidence base for specific interventions for healthy diets from sustainable agrifood systems, such as sustainable public food procurement. Sustainable public food procurement influences both food production and food consumption and can deliver multiple social and economic benefits. It can enhance access to healthy diets (for example, through school meals), as well as promote more sustainable agrifood systems. It can also decrease rural poverty by stimulating the development of markets and can help promote environmental sustainability and the conservation of biodiversity.
In 2022, FAO launched the book *Public food procurement for sustainable food systems and healthy diets*, which was published in partnership with the Alliance of Biodiversity International and CIAT, and the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul. With contributions from over 100 authors from multiple fields, covering experiences from 32 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and North and South America, it is one of the most comprehensive books on the topic to date.

FAO also co-organized a three-day ‘city-to-city exchange’ with the German Institute of Development and Sustainability to share, consider and debate evidence and best practices with policymakers, practitioners and researchers at the local level. Furthermore, FAO with ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability)4 convened a new Interest Group on Sustainable Food Procurement in the framework of the One Planet Network. The group was established to build a bridge between networks on Sustainable Food Systems and Sustainable Public Procurement, contributing to cross-programme collaboration. All these activities contributed to better understanding, dissemination, and use of sustainable public food procurement as a concrete tool for enabling healthy diets from sustainable agrifood systems.

**ACTION BOX 5**

Comprehensive evidence to guide FAO Members on livestock in sustainable agrifood systems for healthy diets

In October 2020, the Committee on Agriculture asked FAO to produce ‘a comprehensive, science- and evidence-based global assessment of the contribution of livestock to food security, sustainable agrifood systems, nutrition and healthy diets.’ The assessment follows an agrifood systems approach, and applies a One Health perspective to assess economic, social and environmental factors linked to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Component Document 1, entitled ‘Contribution of terrestrial animal source foods to healthy diets for improved nutrition and health outcomes’ was produced in 2022. It begins by describing the global nutrition situation, dietary patterns, and agrifood systems in relation to terrestrial animal source foods. It comprehensively analyses the evidence on their nutrient composition, their importance in human nutrition, and their effects on human health across the lifespan. Key findings are based on the review of 123 food-based dietary guidelines from 94 countries; 79 policy documents relating to non-communicable diseases from 60 countries; and legislation, policies and programmes related to food, agriculture and nutrition. A specific section focuses on food safety and food-borne diseases related to terrestrial animal source foods, from producer to consumer.


4 ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability is a global network of more than 2500 local and regional governments committed to sustainable urban development.
Chapter 3: Catalysing policy coherence and collective action for healthy diets

Coherent policy and collective action across agrifood systems are fundamental to realizing healthy diets for all

Policies across agrifood systems need to be coherent, supportive, and mutually reinforcing in order to drive collective action from stakeholders of all relevant sectors towards enabling healthy diets.

As the United Nations specialised agency for food and agriculture, FAO has a leadership role to play in convening and participating in dialogues which catalyse policy coherence, tackle trade-offs, and harness synergies for collective action across sectors and stakeholders. FAO also seeks to create coherence between those policies and actions across agrifood systems which are designed to enable healthy diets, and those designed to improve social, economic and environmental outcomes.

Convening for policy coherence and collective action in action

The Coalition of Action on Healthy Diets from Sustainable Food Systems for Children and All

FAO convened, along with WHO and many other partners, the Coalition of Action on Healthy Diets from Sustainable Food Systems for Children and All (HDSFS), amongst other coalitions, to translate commitments from the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) into action. The HDSFS was formed in response to calls for action to achieve healthy diets from sustainable agrifood systems coming out of the UNFSS. It was officially launched in May 2022, bringing together Member States, UN agencies, civil society organizations, academic institutions and social movements.

In 2022, the Coalition facilitated country-to-country workshops and policy dialogues to generate demand for agrifood systems transformation; compiled and shared resources, tools, best practices
and initiatives for achieving healthy diets; and advocated for healthy diets as a primary goal of agrifood system transformation.

FAO, as one of the leading technical agencies of the HDSFS, provided regular strategic and technical expertise and led a special project on the incorporation of environmental and sustainability considerations into food-based dietary guidelines.

**Climate action and nutrition - healthy diets are key**

Leading up to the 27th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP27), the FAO Regional Office in Cairo, the FAO Country Office for Egypt, and FAO headquarters supported the Egyptian Government as the Presidency of COP27 in technical assistance and convening for informing the COP27. One of many accomplishments of the Presidency was launching the ground-breaking Initiative on Climate Action and Nutrition (I-CAN). The I-CAN seeks to integrate the global delivery of climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts with nutrition to support mutually beneficial outcomes.

“Climate change impacts us heavily in terms of yield, the farmer association is working to support local farmers in accessing agricultural and financial inputs and strengthening capacities to use high-quality seeds and biopesticide to cope with the negative impact of climate change and produce nutritious foods.”

Elizabeth Akaba, Ghanaian farmer and leader of the Tuba Women Farmers Association, at the COP27 side event “Nutrition-sensitive and climate-smart agrifood systems.”


**International conference on geographical indications**

FAO’s convening power was used to bring together stakeholders from around the world on specific topics to catalyse action to enable healthy diets. In 2022, FAO did just that for geographical indications (GI), a label used on goods that have a specific geographical origin, and possess qualities, or a reputation due to that origin.

FAO, partnering with CIRAD,5 organized a conference with over 200 academics, public authorities, producers and organizations from 47 countries to identify trends and research needs, and discuss the environmental sustainability of geographical indications. Smallholder farmers supply around 80 percent of the food available in low-income countries. If they are empowered through geographical indications to preserve and promote their local resources and are granted better market access to quality food products, they could play a key role in strengthening the sustainability of local and global

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agrifood systems. Because geographical indications are protected by intellectual property rights, in accordance with the World Trade Organization and the Geneva Act, they can prevent the delocalization of production, create jobs, boost local development, and contribute to safe, diversified and healthy diets – as well as to the preservation of traditional food products, the environment and biodiversity. The conference allowed for knowledge sharing on geographical indications between academia, networks of producers, and policymakers with the aim of putting this shared knowledge into practice across the world.

DID YOU KNOW? **BOX 2**

Tushuri Guda cheese from the high mountains of Georgia has lower salt as a result of the protected geographical indication achieved in 2019. The lower salt level restored the traditional flavor of this cheese and resulted in a healthier alternative.


**ACTION BOX 7**

**FAO convenes stakeholders to share keys to success in geographical indications**

It is important to share success stories concerning geographical indications, such as that of the Madd fruit from Senegal, so that producers, local authorities, national governments, and all stakeholders can learn from experiences in diverse contexts. The Madd fruit from the forests of Senegal was threatened with extinction due to unsustainable harvesting practices before it received support through a geographical indication. Madd fruit, a rich source of calories, vitamin C, fibre, calcium, magnesium and phosphorous, is sold fresh or made into products such as jam and juice. Its leaves are used in sauces and condiments. FAO supported studies to assess the eligibility of Madd for geographical indication registration and supported stakeholder coordination at local and national levels towards the geographical indication process. The objective was to improve the Madd fruit value chain, to strengthen the organization of pickers, processors and traders, to preserve the traditional use of Madd fruit, and to protect both the threatened fruit and the forests in which it grows.

In-country convening of partners to form agrifood systems pathways to healthy diets

FAO convened partners at the county level to support national and local policy efforts to enable healthy diets. A critical first step to designing agrifood actions that can help enable healthy diets, is to have a clear understanding of how such progress can be achieved. We refer to this as the agrifood systems pathway approach, and it is a tool to improve policy and program design. For example, in 2022, FAO supported its Members and local stakeholders in seven countries (Ethiopia, Haiti, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Papua New Guinea and South Sudan) to develop agrifood systems pathways that enhance the potential of food production activities to contribute to healthy diets. FAO supported a series of awareness-raising activities to familiarize key stakeholders with the use of the agrifood systems pathways to healthy diets to maximize nutrition gains considering the policy and finance landscape.

Through the mapping of agrifood systems pathways to healthy diets, stakeholders reviewed the potential causes and effects of a series of actions in a stepwise manner to identify those most likely to achieve desired outcomes. FAO used this approach to analyse the components of agrifood systems from various drivers of change (such as natural resources, climate change, supply chains, food environment, consumer behaviour – and beyond), to identify critical entry points for action and investment, to enable healthy diets.

The agrifood systems pathways to healthy diets were also used in 2022 through strategic engagement with the World Bank, aiming to integrate nutrition and healthy diets perspectives into World Bank investment projects in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Pakistan and India. These in-country convenings are using healthy diets as a fulcrum to bring together sectors for coherent policies that can drive agrifood systems transformation at the national level.

DID YOU KNOW? BOX 3

FAO hosted the 2022 World Food Forum focused on the theme ‘Healthy Diets. Healthy Planet’ from October 17–21. Among the many important sessions, one brought together leading young advocates and thought leaders to discuss the importance of adolescent nutrition, drivers of adolescent food choices, and young people’s opportunity to shape the future of food.

Learn more on https://vimeo.com/user150756001/wff.
In Yemen, nearly 2.7 million children under the age of five years are suffering from acute malnutrition (also known as wasting), and as many as 47 percent of children 6 to 59 months are experiencing chronic malnutrition (also known as stunting). FAO participated in and provided critical technical insights to the government of Yemen during the Cambridge Policy Boot Camp (CPBC) on Feeding Children Nutritiously for Yemen. The boot camp involved mothers and fathers of children under five, government officials, UN agencies, and other relevant stakeholders. Through an interactive approach, participants jointly came up with policy solutions including:

- Using focused funding and education materials to empower and enhance the role of mothers and carers.
- Visibly make a minimum acceptable diet (MAD) a high priority for the relevant sector.
- Facilitate a shift towards long-term malnutrition prevention through improving trust in local non-governmental organizations (NGO) delivery through increased transparency and financial accounting.
- Create a unified network for developing and sharing national technical knowledge and resources among experts, parents, and carers.

The findings will inform future planning and policymaking processes.

“We welcome the outcome of the policy boot camp session and endeavour to take action to improve the lives of children and women in Yemen.”

Karima Al-Hada’a on behalf of the Deputy Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, Yemen.

Source: Communication with Joel Munywoki, Nutrition and Food Systems Officer, FAO’s Representation in Yemen.
Work on Food Literacy Action Plan in Türkiye provides opportunity for cross-ministerial alignment

In 2022, FAO helped to develop Türkiye’s Food Literacy Strategy and Action Plan. A big success of the project was bringing together the Ministries of Health, Education, and Agriculture and Forestry. Each of them had been carrying out activities related to food literacy and nutrition education, but with limited coordination. FAO provided the environment to discuss activities and outcomes, and to exchange knowledge and materials. The project was launched following a request from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, who noticed that low levels of food literacy (for example, understanding food labelling and date labelling) posed a barrier to reducing food loss and waste.

The Strategy and Action Plan aims to raise awareness among consumers on food and nutrition, develop skills on meal preparation and, ultimately, teach ways to develop more nutritious and sustainable diets.

Chapter 4: Building capacity to achieve healthy diets

Capacity is key to accomplishing healthy diets for all

A core function of FAO is to build the capacity of actors across agrifood systems who can help achieve FAO’s vision for a world where all people are eating healthy diets and the realization of FAO’s ambition for better nutrition as reflected in FAO’s Strategic Framework 2022–2031. FAO provides training and tools to consumers, farmers, the food industry, institutions, international organizations and governments to improve data collection on dietary intake, to enhance agricultural practices, grow investments, and ultimately to build fit-for-purpose agrifood systems that enable healthy diets for all.

FAO’s work in capacity strengthening for healthy diets at the country level

FAO Country Offices reported that FAO provided policy and technical assistance to 106 governments (75 percent) to help enable healthy diets in 2022, including support in developing, revising, or implementing national food-based dietary guidelines and implementing school food and nutrition programmes.

Notes: Data were collected through the FAO Country Annual Report and in alignment with the Accountability Framework indicators 4.1a, 4.2b and 4.3a of the Vision and Strategy for FAO’s Work in Nutrition.

* In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many schools around the world closed in 2020 as a precautionary measure to prevent the spread of the virus. The increase in 2022 over 2020 may be attributed to schools gradually reopening in 2021.

Source: Authors’ own elaboration of data from FAO’s country annual report.

Capacity building in action

Capacity development of small- and medium-enterprises

Small- and medium-enterprises (SMEs) are key actors in agrifood systems. They are highly involved in the production, processing and retailing of food products, which means they are crucial to improving nutrition and diets. As domestic markets expand, there are significant opportunities to establish or grow SMEs. This is especially true for food processors, who could tap into locally available produce to increase the availability and accessibility of nutritious foods. In 2022, FAO designed a mentoring
and coaching programme to support SMEs to integrate nutrition into their business plans and to enhance SME skills and capacities to boost their contributions to nutritious food access. Training included food safety and quality management; the impact of processing technology on nutrition; marketing and branding; nutrition labelling; reducing food loss and waste; and business planning. Following the delivery of this programme, over 60 SMEs developed plans to integrate nutrition-sensitive approaches, practices and products into their business models.

FAO also published an e-learning series targeting SME trainers, SME representatives and policymakers working on SME development, sustainable agrifood systems, and nutrition. In addition, three universities in Viet Nam, Kenya and Ghana piloted a nutrition-sensitive strategy for curriculum enhancement. The enhanced curriculum reached over 1000 students, and 20 other universities have indicated an interest in replicating the approach.

**Female small enterprise CEO provides foods for healthy diets in Ghana**

Eden Tree is a female-led enterprise producing and distributing fresh vegetables, fruits, nuts and herbs in Lashibi, a small town in the Greater Accra Region in Ghana. The chief executive officer (CEO) of Eden Tree attended FAO mentoring and coaching activities on how investments in food and agriculture can improve nutrition. She was trained in food-processing techniques for waste management, cost-effective food safety measures, and food labelling. Following the mentoring and coaching, the CEO commented: “I realized there was a gap in the market, as Ghana’s diet is largely based on carbohydrates and proteins. Therefore, I saw an opportunity to fill that gap and focus on nutritious food products to help consumers have a balanced diet. I am glad that FAO is supporting us to tackle these challenges: middle income consumers are not able to purchase nutritious food, but SMEs can play a key role in making nutritious food available. We are so many. If we work together, our efforts could help tackling these issues.”


**School food global hub**

In June 2022, FAO, in partnership with WFP and supported by the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, launched the school food global hub. The project built on FAO’s expertise in developing normative guidance in a range of technical areas around school food and nutrition, and followed close consultation with sister UN agencies and other technical experts.

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6 The e-learning series is available here: https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=725

7 The Vietnam National University of Agriculture, the University of Ghana, and the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology.

8 The school food global hub is available here: www.fao.org/platforms/school-food
The school food global hub provides experts and professionals with technical resources and guidance from various UN agencies to support the design and implementation of school food and nutrition policies and interventions. Most importantly, the hub hosts country profiles with process-based information on developing and implementing nutrition standards for school meals and on how they integrate food and nutrition contents into their school systems. Twenty-two country profiles have been published and 16 are currently under development.

The hub also engages non-technical audiences like schoolchildren, adolescents, school staff and families, who are not usually considered when designing standards and policies for school food. It also offers a space for youth and the school community to share their experiences and make their voices heard.

**ACTION BOX 11**

**School gardens facilitate healthier eating habits in Sri Lanka**

The Entrepreneurial School Garden programme in Sri Lanka is reaching 200 hundred schools from the North, Central and Uva Provinces. The programme features a discovery-based learning approach for over 100 000 secondary school students, who receive training and tools to cultivate gardens that grow nutritious produce. Over 500 teachers from the three provinces took training to improve skills in nutrition, agriculture and entrepreneurship. An agriculture club in each school was set up to oversee the coordination of the programme, as well as points of sale. The project promoted diverse and healthy eating habits for students, and encouraged them to apply entrepreneurial thinking to agriculture. Partners included private sector organizations, local markets, and the national school meal programme.

“First, we established the agricultural club and started the project in the school with an analysis of body mass index and dietary patterns of the children along with raising awareness on health and nutrition by a public health official. Today, students, teachers, and parents have a better understanding of body mass index and health risk levels, eating habits, and what activities can reduce risk levels.”

Mr P.G.A.R. Banadara, principal of the Diwulapallassa School which benefited from the project. Source: Communication with Nimal Gunasena, Project Manager, FAO Sri Lanka.
Dietary guidelines

Dietary guidelines translate core principles of what constitutes a healthy diet into concrete recommendations for dietary patterns in countries, considering food traditions, preferences and access. They are an essential tool to inform policies for better nutrition and for consumer education. In 2022, FAO supported 56 countries in diverse ways to develop or implement dietary guidelines. In addition, FAO worked towards finalizing new guidance for countries on how to develop or revise and implement dietary guidelines with an agrifood systems approach: the FAO food systems-based dietary guidelines (FSBDG) methodology. Among several countries supported by FAO during 2022 were Ghana, Costa Rica, and Mexico. Ghana developed its first dietary guidelines. Costa Rica revised its guidelines and Mexico planned the implementation of its guidelines. All three countries started integrating an agrifood systems approach.

Also during 2022, FAO led a Special Project on dietary guidelines in the Coalition for Healthy Diets from Sustainable Food Systems for Children and All. As part of this work, FAO is collaborating with Member States, other UN agencies and bodies, NGOs, civil society, academic organizations and others to move forward the thinking and promote dietary guidelines with an agrifood systems approach that include sustainability considerations and that are better developed, revised and implemented.

Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)

FAO has also used modern technologies, including on-line learning, to build capacity strengthening tools for concepts in nutrition and agrifood systems. In collaboration with Agreenium (the French training and research alliance for agriculture, food, environment and global health), FAO developed a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) entitled Nutrition and Food Systems: Pathways to sustainable and healthy diets. The MOOC was offered twice, in both English and French, with 2 630 registrants on the first round and 4 651 on the second.

In addition, FAO supported two African universities: Great Zimbabwe University and Makerere University in Uganda, to adapt the MOOC to their context, and integrate it into their own online learning. Currently MOOC materials are available for self-paced instruction at the FAO e-learning Academy, as well as on the website of the Virtual University of Sustainable Environment and Development. Providing training tools such as the MOOC through online environments allows FAO to reach people in all corners of the globe, including professionals, non-traditional students, and those simply interested in how to achieve healthy diets from sustainable agrifood systems.

DID YOU KNOW? Box 4

FAO recently created a podcast series called "Climate change, biodiversity and nutrition - the nexus," which launched at COP27 in November 2022. The podcast explains how experts generate new ideas to mitigate and adapt to climate change, protect biodiversity, and improve nutrition simultaneously. More than 700 people have listened to the podcast so far. Listen to the podcast on https://soundcloud.com/unfao/sets/climate-change-biodiversity

The MOOC materials are available here: https://elearning.fao.org/local/search/infocourse.php?id=825
FAO successfully provided capacity development and income-generating opportunities for smallholders to benefit from and increase opportunities for better nutrition in Ethiopia, Guyana, Grenada, and Kyrgyzstan in 2022. The solutions proposed and interventions put in place are diverse and context-specific, and include promoting sustainable food production, farmers field schools, cash-plus programs, as well as home-grown school feeding.

For example, thanks to the application of a nutrition-sensitive cash-plus approach, in Kyrgyzstan 156 households received a poultry package that included 20 three-month-old vaccinated chicks, 72 kg of poultry feed, and two sets of feeders and drinkers. Households took part in practical training on breading and on the nutritional value of chicken meat and eggs.

“I am very grateful to the project and to our trainers who taught us how to raise chickens. We got a business idea in our family and our nutrition has improved. I plan to increase the number of hens so that I can engage in poultry farming while raising children and staying at home.”

Sapargul Shorukova, a 32-year-old mother of four from Kyrgyzstan’s village of Oktyabr.

Chapter 5: Strengthening commitment for healthy diets

Commitment is crucial to achieving healthy diets for all

As the United Nations’ specialized agency for food and agriculture, FAO has a fundamental role to play in helping its Members in their efforts to achieve healthy diets. FAO works to strengthen global commitments for better nutrition and to enabling the consumption of healthy diets in many ways. For example, the Organization works on high level advocacy, by fostering and facilitating strong nutrition governance, and by helping governments make country-specific commitments.

DATA BOX 5

FAO’s work in strengthening commitment to healthy diets and nutrition at the country level

In 2022, 80 percent of FAO Country Offices (113) reported they engaged with strategic coordination mechanisms and platforms for nutrition, including UN Country Team, SUN Movement, Parliamentary Alliance, nutrition, and food security clusters or working groups and other platforms. Across the global, FAO participated in a total of 381 coordination mechanisms and platforms.

Commitment in action

Food loss and waste reduction

Reducing food loss and waste is a necessary pillar of agrifood systems transformation to enable healthy diets and improve planetary outcomes for current and future generations. It presents a triple win opportunity: economic benefits for food producers, social benefits in terms of greater availability of nutritious food, and climate benefits through more efficient use of resources and a reduction in greenhouse gases associated with food production and disposal in landfills.
In 2022, following the request of the 26th Session of the FAO Committee on Agriculture, FAO published a Voluntary Code of Conduct for Food Loss and Waste Reduction. The document sets out a framework of actions and guiding principles to reduce food loss and waste and can be used by governments as a basis to develop national and regional strategies, policies and legislation.

The third global observance of the International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste, convened by FAO in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) made a clear call to action for public and private entities to cut food loss and waste to enhance efficient use of natural resources, mitigate climate change and support food security and nutrition. The virtual observance of the International Day captured 1 100 participants from across the globe. A “Get Involved Guide” and several communication products were developed to bring attention to the issues and actions required to stem the problem of food loss and waste.

FAO’s engagement with the Food is Never Waste Coalition – formed to take forward the agenda on food loss and waste reduction following the Food Systems Summit 2021 – continued with the inclusion of a dedicated page on the Technical Platform on the Measurement and Reduction of Food Loss and Waste.

10 Food loss and waste are among the main causes of climate change.
Despite unprecedented global challenges to enhancing food security and improving nutrition, FAO, in partnership with WHO, continued to co-lead the implementation of the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (hereafter referred to as the ‘Nutrition Decade’).

The Nutrition Decade was established in 2016 by the UN General Assembly under the normative framework of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) held in 2014 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development endorsed in 2015. The Nutrition Decade is a commitment by UN Member States to undertake 10 years of sustained and coherent policy implementation, programmes, and increased investments to eliminate malnutrition in all its forms – everywhere, leaving no one behind.
In April 2022, the report of the UN Secretary-General on the Nutrition Decade was released, compiled by the joint FAO/WHO Secretariat, which reported on the Nutrition Decade’s implementation during the period 2020–2021. Key developments towards achieving the global nutrition and related SDG targets included advances in nutrition-related activities within the six action areas of the Nutrition Decade’s Work Programme, advances in the science-base for improved nutrition, as well as other nutrition-related global processes.

**Figure 2: Nutrition at a glance**


**Global action plan on child wasting**

In 2022, FAO worked with sister UN agencies\(^\text{11}\) on the Global Action Plan on Child Wasting\(^\text{12}\) (Action Plan) as a transformative response to the most deadly form of malnutrition in children under the age of five years – wasting. FAO’s role is to ensure that availability and access to healthy diets and other preventative actions are paramount in the priorities for addressing wasting. By the end of 2022, FAO, in partnership with other UN Agencies, supported 22 countries to develop country-level costed roadmaps and the call to action to reach these needs and commitments was underway.

As part of the Action Plan, in 2022, FAO launched the Organization’s *Child wasting prevention action*
plan (2023–2024) to enhance both nutrition in emergency and resilience agriculture to prevent child wasting through inclusive responses aiming at healthy diets for those most in need. The FAO Child wasting prevention action plan complements WFP and UNICEF’s life-saving treatment work by focusing on the prevention of wasting. It calls for USD 500 million to prevent wasting in the most affected 15 countries, by assisting 1 million households with at-risk children, adolescent girls and pregnant or breastfeeding women.

FAO’s work ensures heathy diets are integral in implementing action to end child wasting

In Somalia, FAO aimed to prevent child wasting by combining cash payments with nutrition education and the provision of agricultural and livestock inputs, to increase food security and improve the diets of drought-affected pastoralists and farmers. This allowed both herding and farming families to purchase food in the lean season, and has supported the restoration of diversified agricultural production and consumption.

FAO projects provided families with cash and livelihood support to meet their basic needs and aimed to provide households with sustained access to nutritious food by boosting production, and protecting assets. Each household received a kit that included drought-tolerant crop seeds for household food security; vegetable seeds and fertilizer to support dietary diversity; hoes and forks; hermetic storage bags; and irrigation hours. The kit enabled households to produce their own food, earn an income and use the crop residues as fodder for livestock.

Chapter 6: Enhancing culture, people, and processes in FAO for nutrition.

The Vision and Strategy for FAO’s Work in Nutrition guides FAO to make organizational changes to enable the successful implementation of its work in nutrition. Specifically, FAO is committed to facilitating its work in nutrition through a process of enhancing culture, people, and processes.

Figure 3. Components of organizational change for ensuring an enabling environment for success.

Specific 2022 highlights include:

**Culture – collective ownership and leading by example**

To strengthen and maintain internal collective ownership of its work in nutrition across agrifood systems, FAO has convened numerous webinars, roundtables, workshops, and other communications activities highlighting opportunities to support healthy diets across all areas of work of the Organization as embedded into the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–2031.

Specifically, FAO convened the Organization’s Technical Network on Nutrition (TNN), consisting of personnel from all technical areas of FAO at headquarters and decentralized offices with an interest in the topic. The TNN seeks to share and improve access to expertise, knowledge, and resources related to nutrition across the Organization.

Recognizing that better nutrition should begin at home, more than 70 percent of FAO decentralized offices worldwide reported against recommended actions that aim to strengthen a healthy food environment for their personnel and visitors.

**People – nutrition awareness, knowledge, and expertise.**

To raise awareness, in 2022, FAO continued investing significantly in socializing its work in nutrition. FAO developed an e-learning module to raise the nutrition literacy of all its employees, regardless of their area of expertise.

FAO emphasized experience sharing between FAO decentralized offices offering the opportunity to learn from the wide range of initiatives on healthy diets and nutrition carried out by FAO in diverse
contexts across the globe, including the establishment of an internal knowledge platform on nutrition, technical webinars, informal meetings and workshops, and more.

To monitor and report on its programmatic results and financial resources for nutrition, FAO has improved its use of an FAO Nutrition Marker based on the OECD Nutrition Policy Marker to quantify the Organization’s programmes and projects in terms of their level of nutrition sensitivity.

Based on the Nutrition Marker, in 2022, 41 percent of FAO’s programming results and 62 percent of projects were nutrition-sensitive. These indicators will continue to be tracked to monitor progress towards FAO’s commitment to integrating nutrition considerations across its portfolio.

A fisherman-beekeeper showing honeybees on a sunflower, in the Dikky region of Morocco
Chapter 7: Opportunities to expand and accelerate FAO’s results for better nutrition

Healthy diets are the cornerstone of better nutrition and cannot be achieved without making changes to current agrifood systems. FAO is making important contributions towards these changes, several of which are highlighted in this review. But FAO can and must do much more to realize our ambition for better nutrition, simultaneously with the other three betters, and by doing so contribute to the SDGs. FAO’s work across all areas of agrifood systems can be a catalyst for a nourished world – for both healthy people and planet. Two areas are needed to expand and accelerate action – populations must be motivated and enabled to consume healthy diets from sustainable agrifood systems, and FAO teams and our partners worldwide must be enabled and incentivized to design and deliver effective actions such as supply-side measures for diversifying food production and for increasing availability and affordability of nutritious foods for healthy diets. The FAO nutrition team is engaged in a wide variety of activities, contributing directly to the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–2031, and aligned with the Vision and Strategy of FAO’s Work in Nutrition. Examples of a few new or renewed activities are:

1. Enhance and expand legal, legislative, policy and programmatic actions and investments needed to motivate and enable healthy diets from sustainable agrifood systems, informed by the generation and use of data and evidence:
   - Facilitate access to food and dietary data and statistics through launch of the FAOSTAT Food and Diet Domain, and generate examples of its utility for decision-making, in collaboration with in-country partners.
   - Present potential agriculture and fiscal policy modifications in collaboration with in-country stakeholders, informed by models that optimize healthy diet simultaneously with agricultural outcomes.
   - Adapt the cost and affordability of healthy diet metrics to inform actions at national and sub-national levels, reflecting the diversity of dietary patterns and preferences in countries.
   - Promote and enable the diversification of agricultural production, focusing on diverse nutritious, climate-resilient crops, particularly those that have been neglected in plant breeding and related efforts.
   - Promote and provide technical assistance for the development of food systems-based dietary guidelines and their utilization to inform agrifood system actions.

2. Enable and empower FAO teams around the world, and others, to design and deliver programmes and projects with a high potential to contribute to healthy diets:
   - Create a series of FAO (or joint with other UN Agency, as appropriate) position/briefing papers that provide clear and accessible overviews of complex and/or controversial issues related to nutrition and agrifood systems, for example:
     - What constitutes a healthy diet and how can it be monitored?
     - What are meat alternatives, and do they contribute to healthy diets and a healthy planet?
     - How can the benefits and risks of terrestrial animal source food production be balanced for human, animal and planetary health?
   - Upscale capacity development activities on nutrition-related issues, including essential food and nutrition education; understanding dietary data and food composition; designing policy and programme for healthy diet results; reducing loss and waste of nutritious foods; and building the ability of SMEs to help make nutritious food more available, affordable, convenient, and desirable, among others.
   - Develop new and mobilize existing tools and guidance that provide concrete examples of actions that can enable the consumption of healthy diets, building close linkages across FAO’s areas of technical expertise and offices around the world to maximize relevance and applicability in support of all Members regardless of context.
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Recent highlights towards better nutrition and healthy diets for all

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