



联合国
粮食及
农业组织

Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Organisation des Nations
Unies pour l'alimentation
et l'agriculture

Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная организация
Объединенных Наций

Organización de las
Naciones Unidas para la
Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة
الغذية والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

Hundred and Twenty-sixth Session

Rome, 18-22 March 2019

Evaluation of the strategy and vision for FAO's work on nutrition

Queries on the substantive content of the document may be addressed to:

Masahiro Igarashi
Director, Office of Evaluation
Tel. +39 06570-53903

*This document can be accessed using the Quick Response Code on this page;
an FAO initiative to minimize its environmental impact and promote greener communications.
Other documents can be consulted at www.fao.org
MY898e*



PC 126

Thematic Evaluation Series

Evaluation of the Strategy and Vision for FAO's Work in Nutrition

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF
EVALUATION**

FEBRUARY 2019

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CFS	Committee on World Food Security
CPF	Country Programming Framework
ENACT	Education for Effective Nutrition in Action
ENAF	Education Nutritionnelle en Afrique Francophone
ESN	FAO Nutrition and Food Systems Division
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GLOPAN	Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition
ICN2	Second International Conference on Nutrition
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDD-W	Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women Indicator
REACH	Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNSCN	United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition
WHO	World Health Organization

Glossary

Diet	The kind of food that a person habitually eats. The word 'diet' often implies some specific nutritional intake for health or weight management reasons (with the two often related). Each culture and each person holds some food preferences or some food taboos and individual dietary choices may be more or less healthy.
Diet-related non-communicable disease (NCD)	A medical condition or disease that is non-infectious and non-transmissible among people, caused or aggravated by risk factors strongly associated to diet (e.g. obesity, hyperglycaemia, elevated blood lipids and hypertension). As a result of the 'nutrition transition' (see below), NCDs have emerged as the leading cause of human mortality and morbidity in low-, middle- and high-income countries. The major diet-related NCDs are cardiovascular diseases and diabetes mellitus.
Food-based approaches	Nutritional approaches that focus on food – natural, processed, fortified or in combination – as the primary means for improving the quality of the diet and for overcoming and preventing malnutrition and nutritional deficiencies. These approaches recognize the essential role of food for good nutrition and the importance of the systems involved in the production, trade, retail and transformation of food to determine the "food environment" of consumers.
Food system	All the elements (environment, people, inputs, processes, infrastructures, institutions, etc.) and activities that relate to the production, processing, distribution, preparation and consumption of food, and the outputs of these activities, including socio-economic and environmental outcomes.
Micronutrient deficiencies	Lack of one or more of the micronutrients required for health. They include both vitamin deficiencies and mineral deficiencies .
Nutrition transition	The transition of many developing countries from traditional diets high in cereal and fibre to more Western pattern diets high in sugars, fat and animal-source food, often associated with a rise in dietary non-communicable diseases (NCD).
Obesity	Abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that may impair health. According to WHO, a BMI (Body Mass Index – weight in kilograms divided by the square of height in meters) greater than or equal to 30 is obesity.
Overweight	Abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that may impair health. According to WHO, a BMI (Body Mass Index – weight in kilograms divided by the square of height in meters) greater than or equal to 25 is overweight.

Stunting	Condition of a child, aged 0 to 59 months, whose height for age is below minus two standard deviations (moderate and severe stunting) and minus three standard deviations (severe stunting) from the median of the WHO Child Growth Standards. It measures chronic malnutrition.
Triple burden of malnutrition	Coexistence of (i) undernutrition along with (ii) overweight and obesity, or diet-related non-communicable diseases, and with (iii) micronutrient deficiencies (hidden hunger), within individuals, households and populations, and across the life course.
Wasting	Condition of a child, aged 0 to 59 months, whose weight for age is below minus two standard deviations (moderate and severe wasting) and minus three standard deviations (severe stunting) from the median of the WHO Child Growth Standards. It measures acute malnutrition.

1. Introduction

1. At the request of the Programme Committee in its hundred and twenty-first session in March 2017, the Office of Evaluation (OED) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) undertook an evaluation of the Strategy and Vision for FAO's Work in Nutrition, six years after its adoption in 2012.
2. The objectives of the evaluation were to: a) assess progress achieved in the implementation of the Strategy, especially towards mainstreaming nutrition into FAO's own work and thinking; b) examine how the Strategy, the reviewed Strategic Framework and associated delivery mechanisms have helped FAO to focus and improve its work in nutrition-sensitive food and agricultural systems; c) provide strategic recommendations for FAO at all levels to further mainstream nutrition in the work of the Organization and increase the contribution of food and agricultural systems to nutrition. The evaluated period was 2012-2018.
3. The Nutrition Strategy was meant to directly contribute to the achievement of FAO's Strategic Objective 1 "eradicate hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition", and its evaluation was coordinated with the evaluation of Strategic Objective 1 conducted in 2017-2018. The evaluation scope purposefully excludes the FAO work on Codex and food safety.
4. The policy environment has changed considerably since the Strategy was developed. Driven by the rapid increase of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in countries associated with the double/triple burden of malnutrition, there is an increasing recognition among Member States that effective strategies to address malnutrition must go beyond nutrition-specific interventions and include modifying food environments, particularly the most obesogenic one. Most significantly, in 2015 the United Nations General Assembly endorsed the Sustainable Development Goals, at least eight of which are strongly linked to nutrition.
5. Many new actors and initiatives have entered the nutrition 'landscape' during the last few years, such as the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement, the Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger (REACH) partnership, Nutrition for Growth, the Global Nutrition Report and the Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition (GLOPAN). Multiple private initiatives also emerged. The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and the United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN) were reformed, with the UNSCN Secretariat moving back from Geneva to Rome in 2016. In FAO, nutrition is also increasingly being addressed in FAO Council and FAO Conferences, as well as FAO technical and high-level committees on, for example, Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry and Commodities Problems, as well as in the CFS.
6. This report, prepared for the Programme Committee, provides the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation. Fuller data and analysis that support these findings are provided in the much longer original evaluation report, available from the Office of Evaluation (OED) and its website.

2. Findings

2.1 Relevance to needs at global, regional, and national levels

a) Relevance of the Strategy

7. The Strategy and Vision for FAO's Work in Nutrition strengthened FAO's commitment to this hitherto neglected part of its mandate, which is extremely relevant to the global challenges of malnutrition. So far these challenges have predominantly been approached through direct nutrition interventions mainly implemented in the health sector; yet improving diets through better food systems is an essential move forward as it potentially offers more sustainable solutions to all forms of malnutrition.
8. In practice, a number of factors detracted from the Strategy's relevance within FAO: the Strategy failed to address operational issues in sufficient depth, such as human resource requirements, resource mobilization instruments, or priority setting; it lacked an accountability framework with agreed-upon results and indicators and reporting processes; and the Reviewed Strategic Framework, introduced in 2013, soon took precedence over it. For instance, it became required of the Nutrition and Food Systems Division (ESN) to mainstream nutrition through the Strategic Programme (SP) teams rather than support Country Offices directly.
9. The Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), co-organized by FAO and the World Health Organisation (WHO), was a major achievement during the evaluated period. However, the 60 recommendations resulting from it may have detracted from the relevance of the Strategy as a guiding document for FAO's work in nutrition, significantly broadening the scope of FAO's attention to overweight and obesity, in addition to undernutrition, which was the primary focus of the Nutrition Strategy.
10. The Strategy is now at a variance with the current Medium Term Plan in stating that "undernutrition, including micronutrient deficiencies, should remain FAO's primary focus, as WHO continues to emphasize its work on the public health implications of non-communicable diseases relating to overweight and obesity."
11. Among the things that have changed since the Strategy was adopted, the potential contribution of food systems to nutrition is now centre-stage. It was not fully articulated in the Strategy that did not provide specific examples of which food systems changes could be desirable from a nutritional perspective. This incomplete articulation of food systems as drivers of nutrition by FAO remains an issue today, and represents a holding block to operationalize the Organization's efforts to focus on nutrition. It is partially offset by analytical work recently conducted in partnership with the Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition and by the High Level Panel of Experts of the Committee on Food Security.

b) Relevance of the ESN normative work

12. Recent FAO knowledge products are highly relevant in the context of emerging nutrition challenges, giving attention to all forms of nutrition (not only to undernourishment but also to overweight and obesity). There are some gaps that still need to be filled such as knowledge products better tailored for field level staff and non-specialists, modules on monitoring and evaluation of nutrition-sensitive agriculture, and guidance on how to mainstream nutrition in other sectors than crop production (livestock, fisheries, forestry and value chains).
13. Within ESN, a significant uplift on the policy side, as well as successive "de-emphasis" put on some normative work in the Programmes of Work and Budget for 2016-17 and 2018-19, have resulted in reduced capacities to work on traditional normative products.

c) Relevance of the field programme related to nutrition

14. Since the promulgation of the Strategy, the FAO field programme related to nutrition has evolved, towards a more deliberate effort to address malnutrition, to mainstream nutrition in agriculture development plans, to promote stakeholder coordination, to support dietary diversification, or to target women, girls, infants and young children.

2.2 Effectiveness – the results achieved

a) Results achieved on the Strategy's outcomes

Outcome 1: Generating knowledge and evidence for food-based approaches

15. A large increase in FAO's nutrition-related publications is noted over the evaluated period, as well as an effort to translate more publications into various languages and to develop more integrated packages of publications targeted at different audiences.
16. Many of the reviewed knowledge products were technical in nature and style, with a lack of material targeted at non-specialized personnel, such as policy-makers, mid-level professionals, private sector operators and community-level workers. Even knowledge products explicitly targeted at the youth or a general public often used overly technical language.
17. Modest progress has been achieved in evidence building at country level, e.g. through the progressive integration of nutrition concerns in the suite of Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) tools. The Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women (MDD-W) Indicator has been gaining recognition but has only been piloted on a large scale in few countries so far.

Outcome 2: Improved food and agricultural systems' governance for nutrition

18. At the global level, FAO demonstrated strong leadership in co-convening ICN2, promoting the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016-2025, as well as supporting the development of the 2030 Agenda and informing the tracking of Sustainable Development Goal 2 targets. FAO was also successful in hosting the UNSCN at FAO headquarters, providing mutual benefits and access to a wide range of food system experts.
19. Significant work on governance has taken place in Latin America on school meal programmes, food systems and obesity prevention, in Asia through the promotion of crop and diet diversity, and in Africa where FAO has helped to strengthen countries' capacity for mainstreaming nutrition in their national agriculture and food security investment plans within the context of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and the Malabo Declaration.

Outcome 3: Strengthened national, regional and local capacities

20. There have been a number of promising capacity building projects implemented since the Strategy was promulgated. However, FAO's main achievements in nutrition to date relate to advocacy and sensitization at the global level, more so than to the actual delivery of tested approaches and capacities in the field. FAO is ill-equipped to roll-out its Nutrition Strategy at country level due to a lack of adequate capacity in nutrition in most FAO Country Offices.

b) Knowledge management

21. The Nutrition Strategy lacks an accountability framework in the form of a set of corporate performance indicators and a reporting mechanism. This has deprived ESN of leverage in its relationship with other FAO units and decentralized offices for nutrition mainstreaming, and impaired its capacity to stay

abreast of and support the numerous nutrition-related initiatives now implemented across the Organization.

22. Some progress has been achieved on documenting food-based approaches since the Nutrition Strategy committed FAO to evidence building for nutrition. A number of papers prepared for ICN2 explored some of the nutrition-sensitive pathways in depth, and FAO has published knowledge products evidencing the nutritional outcomes of food-based approaches.
23. FAO's projects implemented at community level do not generally measure or report on their contribution to nutritional outcomes, e.g. more diversified diets. The available monitoring systems are the result of individual initiatives, and the data produced tends to lack quality and comparability with other projects – hence the power of results is often limited. As a result, FAO is not in a position to rigorously test its approaches to nutrition, identify unintended consequences, showcase its best contributions for upscaling and fund-raising, and generally steer its field programme towards better nutritional impact.

c) Gender

24. Data indicates a modest rise in the number and value of FAO nutrition-sensitive projects taking into consideration women's potential contributions to better nutrition, with ample room for progress. Projects jointly implemented with other UN agencies frequently target women, girls, infants and young children. Among the reviewed interventions, nutrition education has proven a particularly useful entry point for enhancing nutritional outcomes, and could be more systematically included in FAO projects. Food processing and local marketing are good opportunities to generate income of women, but remain underutilized.

2.3 Efficiency of work processes to support nutrition work

a) Resources and capacity

25. The FAO field programme related to nutrition has more than doubled and evolved qualitatively since the promulgation of the Strategy. Nevertheless, FAO's programmatic presence in nutrition at country level remains highly variable and dependent on support from a narrow donor base.
26. While FAO human resources for nutrition have remained stable in quantitative terms, a number of key staff have left ESN over the evaluated period, weakening the division's technical capacity and hindering progress in mainstreaming nutrition. The nutrition division was restructured twice during the evaluated period, but synergies have yet to fully materialize.
27. The capacity of Regional and Subregional offices to backstop Country Offices in nutrition has grown to a significant extent during the evaluated period, to very good effect on the field programme.

b) Mainstreaming nutrition in FAO

28. In addition to undertaking its own work programme, ESN liaises with Strategic Programme teams, Regional and Subregional Offices and other FAO units to "mainstream" nutrition into their own programme of work, and ultimately in those of the countries. In practice, ESN's collaboration with other FAO units appears ad hoc and often insufficient to promote nutrition mainstreaming.
29. The guidance for nutrition mainstreaming in Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs) is brief and well-conceived, but not enough to ensure systematic mainstreaming. The country backstopping systems put in place by the other two Rome-based agencies (International Fund for Agricultural Development, IFAD and World Food Programme, WFP) in their own effort to mainstream nutrition are more comprehensive and include a knowledge management system based on programme monitoring and

evaluation (M&E); backstopping staff at headquarters; surge capacity i.e. the capacity to send nutritionists to countries on short notice through partnership agreements with other organizations; as well as guidelines and trainings.

2.4 Strategic positioning

a) Evolution since 2012

30. Among the recommendations from the 2011 evaluation, those about the drafting of the Nutrition Strategy, the mainstreaming of nutrition into the FAO Strategic Framework, and structural changes in the Nutrition Division were fully implemented. Those related to evidence building for food-based approaches and mainstreaming of nutrition in the field programme and policy work of the Organization have seen some reasonable (if slow) progress. Insufficient progress was noted on recommendations pertaining to raising FAO's engagement and visibility in nutrition-related networks.
31. Member countries increasingly associate FAO with nutrition, but FAO does not always have the capacity to respond to their demands. In particular, the implementation of the ICN2 Framework of Action for Nutrition and the promotion of the Decade of Action for Nutrition require urgent attention.
32. Overshadowed to some extent by the Reviewed Strategic Framework approved soon after it, the Nutrition Strategy was not proactively disseminated within or outside of FAO. Not many external counterparts are aware of its existence.
33. FAO's technical guidance on nutrition-sensitive agriculture is much appreciated by stakeholders. There is still a need to formalize to a greater extent the food systems approach, which is a wider concept than nutrition-sensitive agriculture.

b) Comparative Advantages

34. FAO's leadership for matters related to coordination, policy and technical guidance on food-based approaches and food systems to improve nutrition is widely recognized at the global level, but much weaker at country level, where its technical and policy capacities are often weak in nutrition and its convening power is sometimes described as weakening. This capacity gap is widely seen as the core problem FAO needs to solve in order to translate its Nutrition Strategy into sustained and visible action at country level.

c) Partnerships

35. Strong partnerships were promoted and are coming out of the ICN2 International Conference and under the UN Decade of Action for Nutrition, particularly with WHO. The relationship with other partners appears unchanged, and often perceived as insufficient. In particular, FAO's contributions to multi-stakeholder coordination platforms on nutrition, notably SUN and REACH, remain insufficient at both the global and national levels to promote food-based approaches to nutrition. The institutional disconnect between Ministries of Agriculture and Ministries of Health and between the corresponding UN agencies is still present in many countries.
36. Strong links have been tied with the academia for analytical work, or to help African universities develop their own nutrition courses (Education for Effective Nutrition in Action, ENACT/Education Nutritionnelle en Afrique Francophone, ENAF curriculum). More guidance is required on the kind of relationship that FAO projects and staff should develop and maintain with private sector entities in the food systems approach.
37. Regional economic communities and groups as well as regional parliamentary forums were found useful entry points for policy support and advocacy. Many partnerships were built at the regional level,

with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the Latin American Parliament (PARLATINO) in Latin America; with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in the Caribbean; with the African Union, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Africa; and with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in Asia.

38. Relations with donors are an area of concern. The capacity of ESN to approach donors has reduced due to the greater access and visibility afforded to the Strategic Programme Teams in resource mobilization, and a nutrition trust fund set up by FAO after the ICN2 conference was never promoted to donors and never accrued to.

d) Communication

39. ESN has promoted the food systems approach to nutrition through a variety of means and fora. Communication resources tend to be focused on global events, such as ICN2 or the International Symposium on Sustainable Food Systems for Healthy Diets and Improved Nutrition. However, the International Network on Food Data Systems (INFOODS) has grown a large geographical footprint and the teams working on nutrition education and to a certain extent market linkages and value chains have established effective communications through country-level fora.
40. A set of corporate messages around nutrition and food systems, couched in non-technical language, has yet to be arrived at. While avoiding any undue simplification it is important to be able to speak to a non-technical audience in a precise and focussed manner, and translate technical concepts into something local decision makers can grasp and defend.

e) Leadership

41. FAO is recognized as a leading and authoritative source of policy, programme and technical guidance linking agriculture and food systems to nutritional outcomes, but not yet as a change agent yielding global policy influence in food systems reform.
42. Within FAO, insufficient collaboration between ESN and some of the Strategic Programme teams has been a constraint for the rapid identification and adoption of innovative nutrition-sensitive approaches throughout the Organization.

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

3.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 1. Six years after the adoption of the Strategy and Vision for FAO's Work in Nutrition, FAO's involvement in nutrition-sensitive agriculture and later food systems for nutrition has grown significantly and evolved qualitatively. The Organization has had a more visible presence in this domain and has brought to bear significant analytical strengths to advocate for food-based approaches to nutrition, such as its global, regional and national reach and access to the Committee on World Food Security and the United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition, its long experience in the relevant technical sectors and its network of relations with all relevant partner institutions.

43. Nutrition was introduced as a cross-cutting theme in the FAO Strategic Framework and has started to be mainstreamed in the work of all Strategic Programmes. Strikingly, the field programme has

more than doubled since the promulgation of the Strategy, and has evolved towards more deliberate efforts to address all forms of malnutrition, including stunting or anaemia as well overweight and obesity, to mainstream nutrition in agriculture development plans, to promote stakeholder coordination, to support dietary diversification, or to target women, girls, infants and young children.

44. There also has been a surge in the production of knowledge products and in the number of events attended. The pathways from food systems to nutrition have been extensively explored and are increasingly well documented. Driven by the rapid increase of NCDs in countries associated with the double/triple burden of malnutrition, there is an increasing recognition among Member States that effective strategies to address malnutrition must go beyond nutrition-specific interventions and include modifying food environments, particularly the most obesogenic one.
45. FAO has the mandate and the global, regional and national reach required to lead the way in piloting food-based approaches to nutrition, including access to CFS and UNSCN. It can rely on significant strengths: a long experience in the relevant technical sectors, the right tools and indicators, highly motivated teams and relations in general good standing with all relevant partner institutions including resource partners. Member countries increasingly associate FAO with nutrition, and have formulated greater demand in this area of work.
46. There is now considerable global attention being paid to the need to advance food-based approaches in order to effectively tackle the global burden of malnutrition, inside and outside FAO. ICN2 was a seminal moment, which has started to shape FAO's Nutrition Agenda. The adoption of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition by the United Nations General Assembly in April 2016, with its work programme co-lead by FAO and WHO, provides a strong platform for political engagement.

Conclusion 2. The Nutrition Strategy itself was not explicitly operationalized, e.g. costed, funded, adapted to each of the regions and monitored. It lacked an accountability framework, and soon came to be superseded by the Reviewed Strategic Framework in the mindsets of FAO staff. However, the Strategic Framework did not immediately provide a robust work planning and reporting system for nutrition. This lack of a clear, enforced accountability framework on nutrition in FAO has deprived the Organization of a major tool to orient, mainstream and report on its efforts in this domain.

47. Superseded by the Reviewed Strategic Framework, the Nutrition Strategy was not disseminated to regional and country offices. The Reviewed Strategic Framework and its associated monitoring framework and reporting processes were expected to serve for the Nutrition Strategy as well. However, this does not seem to have worked. Very few of the Strategic Framework indicators pertain to nutrition. ESN has reviewed the output indicators and qualifiers of the corporate monitoring framework in preparation of the Programme of Work and Budget (PWB) 2018-19 but the adjustments that could be made were limited. ESN developed clear and rigorous protocols for monitoring the indicators for nutrition mainstreaming under Objective 6, Outcome 6.5 once nutrition was uplifted in the Strategic Framework as a cross-cutting theme to be mainstreamed in the work of all Strategic Objectives. However, reporting against those has been described as a challenge.
48. Over time, other documents and strategies have quite naturally come to guide FAO's work in nutrition, such as the ICN2 outcome document or the Decade of Action work programme. However, these are global frameworks that do not easily translate into an operational plan for any particular organization, and therefore do not substitute for an FAO-wide framework on nutrition promotion and mainstreaming, with clear indicators and standards to help translate FAO Members' goals into precise work planning requirements for specific units and offices.

49. More regular feedback on both the successes and challenges of promoting and mainstreaming nutrition in FAO would also have made the Strategy a “live document”, one that can be regularly updated to take stock of challenges, progress achieved as well as changes in context and policy.

Conclusion 3. Results accruing to Member States are so far concentrated in policy and global advocacy. Less progress has been achieved in reforming the production or curation of data and evidence to support sustainable food-based approaches and nutrition-sensitive food system, and in strengthening regional and country level capacities in nutrition-sensitive approaches.

50. At the global level, FAO demonstrated strong leadership in co-convening ICN2; in promoting the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016-2025; and in hosting the UNSCN at FAO headquarters, providing mutual benefits and access to a wide range of food system experts. ICN2 in particular shored up FAO’s visibility in nutrition, raised attention to food-based approaches among Member States and had a demonstrated effect on the degree to which they prioritize nutrition in their policy and programmatic choices.
51. ICN2 was followed by the International Symposium on Sustainable Food Systems for Healthy Diets and Improved Nutrition, co-hosted by WHO and FAO in Rome in December 2016 and then the five regional nutrition symposia organized under the same theme in all five FAO regions in 2017. Each regional symposium targeted technical officers in relevant ministries as well as key policy-makers, and focused on the nutritional challenges of the region and how a food-systems approach can address these. There is however much room for further progress in strengthening regional and national capacities in nutrition-sensitive approaches.
52. Significant policy work has taken place in Latin America on school meal programmes, food systems and obesity prevention, in Asia through the promotion of crop and diet diversity, and in Africa within the context of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme and the Malabo Declaration, with promising effects.
53. Modest progress has been achieved in evidence building at country level, e.g. through the progressive integration of nutrition concerns in the suite of Integrated Phase Classification tools. The Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women Indicator is important to measure the impact of food-based approaches, although it has not yet been applied widely.

Conclusion 4. Generally speaking, current capacities and skill sets are insufficient to meet the growing demand and address the wide range of possible interventions in a sustainable food systems approach. At country level, FAO’s programmatic presence in nutrition remains highly variable and dependent on donor support. This capacity gap – only partially offset by additional capacity accrued to Regional and Subregional Offices – is widely seen as the core problem FAO needs to solve to translate its Nutrition Strategy into sustained and visible action at country level.

54. Following ICN2, FAO has gradually embraced addressing malnutrition in all its forms and stressed the importance of adopting a food systems approach, which is broader than nutrition-sensitive agriculture. Areas for future work are broad and demanding, including *inter alia*: support to ICN2 implementation and to countries which organize themselves into Action Networks under the Decade of Action; the integration of nutrition education in extension services and Farmer Field Schools; protecting nutrition in times of crisis; the value of animal, fisheries and forestry source foods in promoting diversified diets; consumer information and nutrition education; school meal programmes; urban agriculture and urban-rural linkages; labour saving technologies in agriculture production; nutrition-sensitive social protection; and the interface with food safety.

55. Human resources and skill sets are insufficient to both meet this growing demand and to cope with the challenges of a relatively new area of work requiring new skills and practical experience, e.g. in inter-sectoral policy dialogue, planning and programming, and relations with the private sector.
56. The absence of a corporate resource mobilization instrument on nutrition is a major lacuna that has slowed the Organization's ability to address the double/triple burden in a broad and sustained manner. As a result, FAO lacks resources to fund what essentially amounts to a whole new area of work, and ESN has had to absorb an increase in the scope of its work all the while losing some key staff resources.
57. Despite the increase in the number of nutrition staff in Regional, Subregional and country offices (often funded out of voluntary contributions), most decentralized offices remain under-equipped, resulting in insufficient attendance by senior FAO staff and representatives in dedicated country-level coordination platforms, and weak resource mobilization capacity and visibility in nutrition.
58. Just as nutrition challenges and organizational environments differ widely depending on regional and national contexts, similarly the capacities and priorities of FAO and its partners also vary considerably. This has resulted in highly variable actions and areas of engagement, determined not only by the capacity but also the commitment and dedication of the decentralized offices and their human resources. Hence, FAO's approach to nutrition at the country level depends very much on individual capacities and understanding, rather than being based on corporate strategic directions. As such, opportunities to mainstream nutrition across FAO's field level operations are unevenly utilized.

Conclusion 5. The lack of corporate-wide approach to nutrition extends to monitoring and evaluation, which is not systematically pursued in FAO nutrition-sensitive programmes. As a consequence, FAO is not in a position to rigorously test its approaches to nutrition, identify unintended consequences, showcase its best contributions and advocate for food system approaches.

59. The monitoring systems in existence are the result of individual initiatives, and the data produced tends to lack quality and comparability. Even the usually quite thorough NSA guidelines initially lacked a section on improved monitoring and evaluation of nutrition-sensitive agricultural programmes.
60. As a consequence, while FAO has developed a good number of frameworks and related knowledge products on food-based approaches, these are not yet backed up with lessons-based information that would facilitate their successful operationalization at country level. This is true not only for FAO, but for agriculture investments across the board in other institutions, e.g. the World Bank and IFAD.
61. Generally speaking, health-based interventions are well-studied and initially appeared to represent 'magic bullets' towards improved nutrition. Food-based approaches are now widely seen as more sustainable, but they are also far more complex and more difficult to demonstrate scientifically, due to their long, socio-economic impact pathways. This places these approaches at a disadvantage in advocacy and resource mobilization compared to health-based approaches. Reversing this situation will require a dedicated effort to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of nutrition-sensitive projects, using *sui generis* methodologies adapted to food-based approaches rather than trying to emulate the indicators and methods of nutrition-specific interventions.

Conclusion 6. FAO has been slow in defining its approach, priorities and communication regarding food systems and nutrition. It has yet to provide guidance to its Country Offices on this matter as well as on the related issue of how to engage the private sector, essential to any food systems approach, in a pragmatic yet principled manner at country level.

62. This is a conclusion supported by the Synthesis of Findings and Lessons Learned from the Strategic Objective Evaluations, which highlights challenges in defining and articulating food systems approaches in the theories of change under each of the Strategic Objectives.
63. FAO has set-up a technical task team involving all Strategic Programmes, relevant technical divisions including ESN and regional focal points to develop a food systems framework which attempts to articulate how food system development contributes to all aspects of FAO's mandate. Strong leadership and clear mandates will be needed to roll out a coherent food systems approach across the Organization.
64. A set of corporate messages around nutrition and food systems and what FAO can do to help reform them, couched in simple, non-technical terms has yet to be arrived at. There have been significant efforts in this direction, notably the International Symposium on Sustainable Food Systems for Healthy Diets and Improved Nutrition organized by FAO and WHO in December 2016, which produced a document organizing 11 key messages around three sub-themes on supply-side measures, demand-side measures, and accountability, resilience and equity.
65. It is important to be able to speak to a non-nutritionist, non-technical audience, and translate technical concepts into something local decision makers and the private sector can grasp and defend. Reaching out to the private sector is key to any food systems approach, but this implies reputational risks for the Organization. An institutional protocol for guiding such engagements is available but quite detailed and precautionary, and better suited to dealing with a large international corporation with a legal office than for engaging productively with a farmer cooperative or a local supermarket chain in a developing country. Country Offices would need more pragmatic guidelines from headquarters on how to work with national or local, small-scale and medium-scale food enterprises, private dealers and cooperatives, with a level of standards to guard against conflict of interest and reputational risks adapted to Country Office capabilities and commensurate with the level of risk, which might arguably be lower when partnering with small-scale, local companies than when dealing with large international ones.

3.2 Recommendations

Recommendation 1. The Strategy and Vision for FAO's Work in Nutrition should be updated in order to take stock of ICN2, reflect the broadened focus on "all forms of malnutrition" including overweight and obesity, articulate the potential contribution of food systems to nutrition over and beyond nutrition-sensitive agriculture, and strengthen accountability towards Member States with a robust accountability framework.

66. The evaluated Strategy has been overtaken by events, and there is now a need to update, adjust to rising challenges and retool nutrition in FAO with a strong accountability framework. The new updated Strategy must take account of operational, staff and financial constraints, and strike a careful balance between continuity for key normative products and their necessary evolution.
67. The revised Strategy needs to take stock of ICN2, of the 2030 Agenda, of the Decade of Action for Nutrition and of the broadened focus on "all forms of malnutrition" including overweight and

obesity. It must clarify FAO's nutrition role in achieving the SDGs, make unambiguous commitments by FAO at political, financial and technical levels towards improving its nutritional impact, and articulate in summary form the FAO nutrition-sensitive food systems approach. The latter should be further summarized in a small set of crisp messages that every FAO staff can easily memorize and quote about how to reform food systems for improved nutrition.

68. It would be desirable to link explicitly the updated Strategy with the Sustainable Development Goals given that ICN2 and the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition are not always known at country level or perceived as relevant compared to the SDGs.
69. Regional chapters should be drafted in consultation with Regional Offices, as a way to fine tune the corporate focus and approaches to specific regional opportunities, challenges and priorities, get buy-in from the Regional and Subregional Offices, and practically support the roll out of the strategy to regions and countries. These could include sections on countries in special development contexts, such as the special case of Small Island Developing States, which tend to import a lot of their food and suffer from high overweight and obesity levels, and countries in protracted crises where malnutrition can quickly deteriorate for a large number of people.
70. Chapters could also be dedicated to each Strategic Objective, to give strategic direction on mainstreaming nutrition into the Strategic Programme teams work plans and those of their contributing technical units.
71. Most importantly, the updated Strategy must include a robust section on implementation mechanisms, and an accountability framework i.e. a mandated periodic report to FAO's membership against a set of minimum standards or indicators of success, thus giving ESN, which must lead this effort, a better capacity to stay abreast of and support nutrition mainstreaming within FAO.

Recommendation 2. ESN should strive to better maintain functions over time when key staff are moving to new positions, strengthen its collaboration with other units and divisions at headquarters, and lead the development of an organization-wide network of resource persons for nutrition-sensitive approaches in order to build internal capacity and further mainstream nutrition within the Organization.

72. The division should continue its progressive integration of work plans and deliverables. It is also important to build a common vision of the challenges ahead, and the formulation of an updated strategy may help in this regard. Acknowledging the efforts made so far in terms of weekly ESN Management Team Meetings and various technical seminars on relevant subjects (technical, but also on policy and programme formulation), more mutual learning, sharing of information and technical discussions within ESN would help make fuller use of the expertise available and the different skill sets within the team to better address the evolving demands on relatively new subjects. It would also help maintain both work satisfaction and quality of output.
73. ESN should strive to better maintain functions overtime when key staff are moving to new positions. It must be recognized however that the division has had limited control over some of the general managerial and functioning constraints of the Organization as a whole, such as the long centralized processes to fill vacant positions, and corporate mobility imperatives. For the latter, the silver lining is that FAO's capacity in nutrition has seen a significant investment in recent years at the Regional and Subregional levels, since in the current decentralized model, technical support to Country Offices is the responsibility of Regional and Subregional Offices. Headquarters units as well as Regional and country offices also frequently hire nutrition consultants, e.g. as part of national or regional projects.

74. FAO's nutrition capacity is now spread across the globe and the expertise and experience of this team needs to be harnessed in innovative ways. It is essential to create and maintain an organization-wide network for knowledge exchange on nutrition-sensitive approaches. FAO has started using information technology for distance learning and regular meetings in the field of nutrition, and this effort should be expanded to help teams at headquarters and the different regions learn from each-other, including horizontal learning (from region to region).
75. Regional and Subregional Offices are no longer required to formally clear Terms of Reference and recruitment criteria with the 'mother division' at headquarters. Nevertheless, they should still keep ESN 'in the loop', i.e. strongly connected with regional nutrition-sensitive consultants and staff for knowledge management and training purposes, and as a way to promote coherence of approaches across the Organization.
76. There are opportunities to better mainstream nutrition and food systems into the overall policy work of FAO. ESN's policy work could benefit from stronger links with the Economic and Social Development's (ESD's) Governance and Policy Group for ensuring alignments and synergies.
77. ESN should also strengthen its collaboration with Strategic Programme teams and with relevant technical divisions at headquarters, and thus support a more proactive integration of nutrition into FAO's work. The idea of dedicated Strategic Objective focal points who can effectively support the integration of nutrition in their respective SOs may need to be revisited. A centralized approach with one or two staff entirely dedicated to nutrition mainstreaming for all SOs might be more effective than the focal point system.

Recommendation 3. Keep on clarifying the main impact pathways from food systems to nutrition and clearly communicate FAO's role and priorities in this domain. Building on the current effort to craft a food system framework, FAO should distill its vision of how to link agriculture and food systems to nutrition outcomes in simple, crisp "FAO talking points" for food-based approaches to nutrition. It would be desirable to keep this list reasonably concise to give FAO's communication efforts greater focus, coherence, clarity and visibility.

78. Food-based approaches to nutrition are still poorly charted and understood and the potential contribution and priorities of FAO in this domain are often unfamiliar to decision makers. It is important to be clearer on the story line, the narrative used to advocate, convince and get the buy-in of ministers, policy-makers, private operators and donors.
79. Building on the current effort to craft a food system framework, FAO should describe what it can do to help link agriculture and food systems to nutrition outcomes in very practice terms (e.g. how can a farm, a food processing unit or a food retailer become more nutrition-sensitive). This information should be summarized in simple, non-overly technical language, and broadly shared within FAO and beyond to serve as the "FAO talking points" for food-based approaches to nutrition. It should be included in the updated Nutrition Strategy as a way to make the Strategy more persuasive and practical, as mentioned in Recommendation 1.
80. FAO has limited means of implementation. Therefore, it would be desirable to keep a reasonably short and focussed list of impact pathways that FAO wishes to promote and communicate upon more systematically.

Recommendation 4. Improve coordination and collaboration with nutrition stakeholders, e.g. with the UN Network for SUN for greater country-level outreach and ICN2 follow-up, with UNSCN for global policy convergence and knowledge sharing, with GLOPAN for global advocacy and with universities and research centers to generate evidence for food-based approaches to nutrition.

These efforts should continue to involve the FAO Director-General, who has played an important role in forging new partnerships, in raising the profile of nutrition-related events as well as in general advocacy.

81. It is well recognized that making a sustainable difference on nutrition requires the collaboration and coordination of several sectors. This calls for an amplification and diversification of existing partnerships, e.g. with the private sector as already mentioned, with other UN agencies or with the Ministries of Health. However, the coordination architecture in nutrition is complex and duplicative, and FAO Country Offices have limited means to participate in nutrition-specific coordination spaces. It is therefore recommended that FAO prioritize its contribution to the UN Network for SUN for country-level engagement, as befits a founding partner of this key initiative, in order to capitalize upon and contribute to its knowledge management tools and wide networks. Support to the UNSCN should continue as it effectively facilitates coordination, policy convergence and knowledge sharing at the global level, as well as with GLOPAN on global advocacy.
82. The implementation of the ICN2 Framework of Action for Nutrition and the promotion of the Decade of Action for Nutrition require urgent attention. FAO should provide technical assistance to enhance and track country 'SMART commitments' (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) for nutrition in a systematic manner, and most importantly, contribute to the implementation of these country commitments. The Decade has also resulted in country-led "Action Networks" that may need technical support.
83. Collaboration should be strengthened with universities and research centres (e.g. International Food Policy Research Institute, IFPRI) to generate evidence for food-based approaches to nutrition, starting with FAO nutrition projects themselves. To be in a better position to pilot, assess and evaluate its approaches to nutrition, identify unintended consequences, showcase its best contributions for upscaling and mobilize resources, FAO needs to develop a set of sound and feasible methodologies to assess the nutritional impact of nutrition-sensitive programmes, apply these methodologies systematically to large FAO nutrition-sensitive projects and ensure that the best results are published in the scientific literature.
84. Regional organizations have proven promising entry points for FAO's policy work and these partnerships should continue to be strengthened and leveraged for effective policy action on food and nutrition security at the national level.
85. There is a need to sustain over time the political commitment of the Organization towards this long-neglected part of its mandate. The involvement of FAO's leadership has had a strong impact in forging new partnerships, in raising the profile of key nutrition-related events, as well as in general advocacy, and should continue as a way to help influence countries and donors at the highest political level.

Recommendation 5. ESN should maintain its current set of normative products, build upon its vast library knowledge products to support policy change and adopt a more bottom-up approach in knowledge production, as befits an increasingly decentralized technical assistance model.

86. The evaluation found that all the main technical areas and normative products of ESN remain relevant and useful. Some naturally deserve updates or modifications, and additional experience-based knowledge products are needed to support Member States and FAO Decentralized Offices, as follows:
 - FAO should continue to collect information on dietary patterns to support the promotion of healthy and sustainable eating, including on the [Global Individual Food Consumption Data Tool](#),

but this platform needs to be more actively promoted in the academia and ought to be linked up with other similar platforms (e.g. that of Tufts University).

- The Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women (MDD-W) Indicator is important to measure the impact of food-based approaches. It is gaining popularity, although it has not yet been applied widely and requires further field level testing and promotion in partnership with the FAO Statistics Division (ESS). During the SDG era and inspired by the “leave no one behind” principle, FAO may also help develop and promote dietary diversity indexes applicable to the general population, irrespective of age or sex.
 - The Food Composition Tables evolution towards covering more and more diverse food types including local, indigenous and wild foods is relevant for diet diversity, but cannot evidently be achieved with the meagre means of FAO alone, and ought to be designed as a broader endeavour with multiple partnerships, building on the strong INFOODS network at regional and national levels, while keeping FAO as custodian of the data in order to ensure its neutrality and free dissemination.
 - Food-Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDG) have been supported in many countries before and after 2011-12. An analysis of the existing pipeline and how the FBDG are used at regional and country levels would help identify future options.
 - Capacity development: expand ENACT/ENAF beyond Africa, add a Spanish version of the current curriculum and develop more specialized curricula for universities who want to move beyond the basics of nutrition. It is also necessary to keep raising awareness of FAO technical staff and to build planning capacity of local governments. FAO could potentially partner with Ag2Nut on this. The UNSCN network is currently creating national Ag2Nut groups, and those so far created have universally valued curriculum development on agriculture-nutrition linkages.
 - The links between diets and poverty is an area that requires further analysis and data, especially regarding how accessible and affordable nutritious food is for poor people. Issues of inequity and inequality are increasingly recognized as central to understand malnutrition. There is scope for significant health gains if a diet rich in vegetables, fruit, fish and quality vegetable oil could be more accessible to poor people.
 - Policy support: building on Recommendation 3 which calls for communication on the impact pathways from food systems to nutrition, knowledge products specifically targeted at policy actors and that support FAO’s role and country efforts in the policy cycle on nutrition and food systems (from policy setting, to implementation and evaluation) should be prioritized, in collaboration with SP1.
87. FAO and specifically ESN may wish to consider a more bottom-up knowledge management approach. The often excellent knowledge products emanating from Regional and Country Offices are rarely published globally and usually not translated into other languages, leading to a mass of knowledge that is never even properly disseminated within the Organization. Within an increasingly decentralized technical assistance model, this issue deserves correction from a knowledge management standpoint, but also as a source of motivation for field staff.
88. An emerging area of normative work is that of the integration of nutrition considerations in agricultural extension systems. FAO should build upon the few excellent documents it has already produced on this topic to develop and disseminate extension modules devoted to the production of diverse, nutrient-dense foods and complementary feeding advice. These modules could be used to promote nutrition education more systematically within FAO’s own Farmer Field Schools programmes as well as in national extension services.

Recommendation 6. Develop tools to support more systematic nutrition mainstreaming in the FAO field programme: a ‘nutrition marker’ to flag projects with a strong nutrition component; a series of nutrition country assessments progressively rolled out as part of the CPF preparation process; an expansion of current training and knowledge management platforms to all FAO staff and consultants; improved guidance on how to work with small- and medium-scale private sector entities; and a global financing instrument able to translate the visibility accrued to FAO through ICN2, the Decade of Action and the Zero Hunger Challenge into financial resources that the Organization can use to expand its normative and field-level work in nutrition-sensitive food systems.

89. Systematic nutrition mainstreaming in the field programme will not happen by chance. FAO Country, Regional and Subregional Offices need to be capacitated to explore potential for nutrition-sensitive programming, and tools should be developed to support them, as follows:

- A simple nutrition marker should be affixed to each and every FAO project at the design stage to flag projects with a strong nutrition component, which should be monitored and backstopped closely by ESN and Regional Offices. This tool would also facilitate consolidated reporting on nutrition across all projects, country programmes and Strategic Programmes of the Organization, which is currently an area of weakness.
- A series of country assessments on nutrition and food systems: taking stock of recent research results and past analytical work, including the Nutrition Country Papers produced by the FAO Investment Centre in Africa in the context of CAADP, the FIRST Facility country profiles drafted in 2016 and 2017, and the various monographs and datasets available, a series of country-level assessments should be developed and gradually rolled out to inform FAO’s own programmes at country level, linked in each country with the CPF preparation process as already the case for the Country Gender Assessments prescribed by the FAO Policy on Gender Equality. This will create opportunities to explore context-specific programmatic entry points in nutrition during the broad engagement of the Country Office with the Government, United Nations agencies, donors and other stakeholders that typically happens in the CPF preparation process.
- Expand training opportunities and e-learning resources on nutrition and food system approaches, promote them to FAORs, assistant FAORs, staff and consultants in Country Offices, irrespective of status, based on the actually perceived gaps at country level.
- A system of exchange of lessons and best practices between countries and regions would also be very useful, e.g. through a regular webinar showcasing best practices in nutrition or through a “nutrition Award” giving visibility to the most proactive Country Offices.
- Country Offices need better guidance on how to approach and maintain relationships with small- and medium-scale private sector entities, with provisions against conflict of interest that remain manageable for Country Offices and small-scale entrepreneurs, and commensurate with the level of risk. This is not an issue for ESN alone as it goes well beyond nutrition; therefore its resolution should involve Strategic Programme 4 and the Office for Partnerships and South-South Cooperation as well. The CFS and its Private Sector Mechanism and Civil Society Mechanism could be approached to explore options.
- Last but not least, explore with interested donors ways to relaunch the post-ICN2 nutrition trust fund or an equivalent global financing instrument (e.g. a ‘Zero Hunger’ fund) that could translate the visibility accrued to FAO through ICN2, the Decade of Action and the Zero Hunger Challenge into financial resources that the Organization can use to expand on its nutrition work in a more rapid, deliberate and systematic manner. Such a fund would allow FAO to better promote this agenda in countries and regions that are not priorities for resource partners, such as Latin America.

90. Among these proposed tools, the country assessments appear indispensable to the evaluation team. Numerous other organizations are producing nutrition country profiles, but these are mere datasheets of indicators. They may suffice for health-based approaches, but a food-based

approach to malnutrition needs to be grounded in a firm qualitative understanding of the root causes of malnutrition within food production, distribution and consumption, in order to address these root causes. Country assessments would also usefully feed into the preparation process for new United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs), and help equip FAO Country Offices with solid analytical arguments in favour of nutrition-sensitive approaches in their engagement with various coordination and governance forums at the national level.

Recommendation 7. At this time when FAO needs to address new challenges such as overweight and obesity, nutrition in crisis and conflicts, or sustainable food systems, it should strengthen its capacity to backstop Country Offices and help them and their national counterparts design nutrition-sensitive projects, programmes and policies, through a combination of more positions in Regional, Subregional and Country Offices, and a temporary surge capacity in new technical areas.

91. Most Country Offices are not well equipped technically to communicate on nutrition, engage new partners and develop a nutrition-sensitive pipeline of projects and programmes. FAO on the other hand has limited capacity to create new permanent technical positions. However, to ensure that emerging issues are addressed in a coherent manner and with a policy focus, a core technical coordination capacity is needed at headquarters and in Regional and Subregional Offices. Country Offices also need to become more “savvy” at engaging with both Member States and the donor community on nutrition-sensitive approaches.
92. The examples of Regional and Subregional Offices and Resilience Hubs (e.g. in Southern Africa) who have hired new dedicated staff funded out of voluntary contributions (i.e. projects) to backstop Country Offices has been extremely positive in generating growth in nutrition-sensitive programming of good quality, and should be pursued further. When mobilizing resources for nutrition, FAO should prioritize strengthening the capacity of its Regional/Subregional Offices and Resilience Hubs to backstop Country Offices in the design of nutrition-sensitive programmes, supervise M&E on food-based approaches and most importantly, build the capacity of national counterparts and particularly Ministries of Agriculture, who also need to develop their capacity in nutrition-sensitive policies, projects and programmes.
93. Resources permitting, FAO could also create corporate positions of national nutrition-sensitive officers in countries with a high burden of malnutrition, and these could backstop nearby countries.
94. Along the same lines, FAO could also envisage setting up a small, temporary surge capacity in nutrition-sensitive programming, able to backstop countries on short notice, i.e. prepare a country assessment, identify entry points and interested partners, and develop a few concept notes. This surge capacity could offer a mixed skill set of policy and programmatic experience in nutrition-sensitive approaches in various technical profiles over and beyond nutritionists, such as agronomists or private sector specialists. The mechanism would need to be funded out of voluntary contributions, and could be managed by the Investment Centre (TCI), or in partnership with the European Union Nutrition Advisory Services, or by a South-South cooperation programme in nutrition.