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Mid-term Review of UN Decade of Action on Nutrition

Executive Summary

As recommended in 2014 by the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), the United Nations (UN) General Assembly proclaimed in 2016 the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016-2025, which provides a time-bound cohesive framework to implement the ICN2 commitments. FAO and WHO were mandated to co-lead the implementation of the Decade through a dedicated Work Programme. The Decade reaches its mid-term in 2020. This document provides an update on the preparatory process of the mid-term review of the Decade.

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I. Background

1. In April 2016, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly proclaimed 2016-2025 the United Nations (UN) Decade of Action on Nutrition (“Decade”) through Resolution 70/259.¹ In this resolution the UN General Assembly mandated FAO and WHO to co-lead the implementation of the Decade.

2. The Decade is a commitment by UN Member Nations to undertake ten years of sustained and coherent implementation of policies, programmes and increased investments to eliminate malnutrition in all its forms, everywhere, leaving no one behind.² Its aim is to accelerate implementation of the commitments made at the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) in 2014, achieve the global nutrition and diet-related non-communicable disease (NCD) targets by 2025, and contribute to the realisation of the SDGs by 2030.

3. The Decade’s Work Programme embraces six cross-cutting and connected action areas, based on the 60 recommendations of the ICN2 Framework for Action,³ namely:

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

II. Mid-term review of the Decade

4. The UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution 1989/84⁴ on international decades provides that the implementation of a decade’s programme of work should be appraised at the mid-point and at the end of the decade.

5. In keeping with resolution 1989/84, the status of implementation of commitments of the Rome Declaration on Nutrition should be reviewed at the mid-term and at the end of the Decade, in an open and participatory process.

6. The Decade reaches its mid-term in 2020 and the joint FAO/WHO Decade Secretariat is therefore preparing for its Mid-term Review (MTR).

7. The objectives of the MTR of the Decade⁵ are to assess and evaluate the achievements in individual policy areas of the ICN2 Framework for Action, as reflected in the action areas of the Decade's Work Programme, over the period from 2016 to 2020, with a view to: (i) highlighting specific advances, initiatives and partnerships in nutrition during the first half of the Decade; (ii) identifying the constraints encountered and the actions needed to overcome them during the second half of the Decade; (iii) and identifying focus areas for priority action for the second half of the Decade.

¹ www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/259

² A dedicated website on the Decade is available in all six UN languages: www.un.org/nutrition

³ www.un.org/nutrition/sites/www.un.org.nutrition/files/general/pdf/work_programme_nutrition_decade.pdf

⁴ https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/75597/files/E_RES_1989_84-EN.pdf

⁵ www.un.org/nutrition/sites/www.un.org.nutrition/files/general/pdf/conceptnote_mtr_nutrition_decade.pdf

III. Progress and opportunities for action in Action Area “Sustainable, resilient food systems for healthy diets”⁶

8. During the first few years of the Decade, many high-level reports and resolutions have showed the critical role of sustainable, resilient food systems for healthy diets and improved nutrition.⁷ The reports have recognized agro ecology and biodiversity, sustainability issues in national food-based dietary guidelines, measures to reduce food loss and waste, and actions for enhancing food supply resilience in crisis-prone areas. Governments have accelerated measures to reduce or eliminate industrially-produced trans fats and food industry has implemented voluntary or mandatory reformulation of processed food products to reduce their salt content.

9. Food systems should enhance food security and nutrition for all, be economically sustainable, be inclusive and have a positive impact on the climate and the environment.⁸ To drive progress towards that vision in the second half of the Decade, the joint FAO/WHO Decade Secretariat encourages countries to:

- *Recognize that agriculture and food systems delivering safe, diversified and healthy diets that include sustainability considerations are at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.* The UN Food Systems Summit in 2021 will address biodiversity, ecosystems, the challenges of climate change, and recognize food systems as important for achieving the SDGs by 2030.⁹
- *Include nutrition objectives in food, agriculture and other sector policies. No sector should impede promoting healthy diets and improving nutrition.* Countries need to focus more on actions to promote the diversification of crops, increase the production of fruits and vegetables, legumes and pulses, raise production of oils that contribute to healthy diets, create healthy food environments and implement food price policies to support healthy diets.¹⁰
- *Ensure that everybody worldwide has access to affordable safe, diverse and nutritious foods that contribute to healthy diets.* Countries need to identify trade-offs between environment, health and economics and further opportunities to enable healthy diets through the food system.¹¹
- *Strengthen local food value chains through cold chain technology, improve post-harvest handling and connect smallholders to new supply chains.* This can lead to lower resource use, including energy, labour, land and capital,¹² as well as safe foods for human consumption.

IV. Progress and opportunities for action in Action Area “Trade and investment for improved nutrition”¹³

10. While trade can enhance food security and nutrition, trade policy, nutrition action coherence, governance and cross-sectoral cooperation are also important.^{14,15} Some global value chains and agrifood industries currently produce environmentally unsustainable food products high in unhealthy fats, sugars or salt. With food supply globalization, populations are more exposed to different food hazards. Increased foreign direct investment has been linked to higher consumption of sugar-

⁶ www.un.org/nutrition/sites/www.un.org.nutrition/files/general/pdf/nutrition_decade_mtr_background_paper_en.pdf

⁷ See, for example, www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca6640en ; www.g20.utoronto.ca/2018/2018-07-28-g20_agriculture_declaration_final.pdf ; <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/74/149> ; <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/73/253> ; <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/74/242> ; <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/73/132>

⁸ www.fao.org/director-general/speeches/detail/en/c/1260815/

⁹ www.fao.org/webcast/home/en/item/5213/icode/

¹⁰ www.fao.org/3/na753en/na753en.pdf

¹¹ www.fao.org/3/CA2797EN/ca2797en.pdf

¹² www.fao.org/3/ca1505en/CA1505EN.pdf

¹³ www.un.org/nutrition/sites/www.un.org.nutrition/files/general/pdf/nutrition_decade_mtr_background_paper_en.pdf

¹⁴ <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/73/132>

¹⁵ www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/sps_e/faowhowtoapril19_e.htm

sweetened beverages.^{16,17} Prioritizing health over short-term economic gain leads to greater long-term economic gains.^{18,19}

11. For the remaining years of the Decade, the joint FAO/WHO Decade Secretariat proposes the following priority focus areas:

- *Use trade policy, including instruments such as tariffs and quotas, to improve the food supply.* The World Trade Organization provides space for import restrictions to protect population health, through changes within the bound tariff rates and through health exceptions. Public health professionals could assist economic and legal professionals and trade economists in advocating trade and investment policy.
- *Strengthen regional partnerships among countries, leverage existing regional economic groups, and improve data collection and tools.* Global institutions could continue to gather data and support methods for better understanding trade policy impacts on nutrition.
- *Invest responsibly in agriculture and food systems by international institutions, governments, and the private sector.* More investment is needed to enhance food security and nutrition and boost economic development. Trade policies need to complement investments in domestic agriculture and social safety nets.²⁰

¹⁶ www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4890476/pdf/12992_2016_Article_161.pdf

¹⁷ <https://globalizationandhealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12992-015-0127-7>

¹⁸ www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/380728/pb-tallinn-01-eng.pdf

¹⁹ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13679-013-0064-9>

²⁰ www.fao.org/3/ca1505en/CA1505EN.pdf