



# CONFERENCE

## Forty-third Session

Rome, 1-7 July 2023

## Evaluation of the International Year of Fruits and Vegetables 2021

### Executive Summary

The United Nations General Assembly declared 2021 the International Year of Fruits and Vegetables (IYFV) and designated the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) as the lead agency to celebrate the Year in collaboration with governments, international organizations and relevant non-state actors.

The main objective of the IYFV was to raise awareness of, and direct policy attention to, the nutritional and health benefits of fruit and vegetable consumption; the contribution of fruit and vegetable consumption to the promotion of diversified, balanced and healthy diets and lifestyles; to reduce loss and waste of fruit and vegetables; and endorse sustainable agricultural practices.

The IYFV was promoted through an intensive communications campaign, making particular use of social media, a designated website, and the production of promotional videos. Events, workshops and webinars were held throughout the regions, organized by a variety of actors, promoting the IYFV and disseminating information on the importance of consuming fruit and vegetables as well as ways to reduce food loss and waste and support more sustainable production practices.

The IYFV closing ceremony was held virtually on 24 February 2022, during which a general desire was expressed to see the momentum of the IYFV carried beyond the closure of the official Year.

The attention of the Conference is drawn to the importance of maintaining this impetus and continuing to promote increased fruit and vegetable consumption as part of a healthy balanced diet and lifestyle, improving sustainable food production through innovation, and using technology to reduce food loss and waste.

### Suggested action by the Conference

The Conference is invited to:

- a) endorse the present report, noting the substantial achievements made at all levels in the context of the International Year of Fruits and Vegetables (IYFV) 2021;
- b) highlight the importance of fruit and vegetables for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030;

- c) encourage FAO Members and other relevant stakeholders to pursue the momentum of the IYFV by taking concrete actions to promote increased fruit and vegetable consumption for improved human health and more sustainable practices in fruit and vegetable production and trade, all within the context of more efficient and resilient agrifood systems.

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## I. Introduction/Background

1. Following the proposal by the Government of Chile, the United Nations General Assembly endorsed resolution A/RES/74/244 declaring 2021 as the International Year of Fruits and Vegetables (IYFV) and designating the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) as the lead agency for its implementation in collaboration with governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders.
2. FAO hosted the Secretariat of the IYFV and supported its International Steering Committee (ISC), established in April 2020. The ISC was chaired by the Permanent Mission of Chile to the Rome-based UN Agencies and was composed of representatives of FAO Members, UN agencies and international organizations, academia and research institutes, civil society organizations, global farmer organizations and the private sector. FAO provided technical support throughout the year.
3. After its official launch in December 2020, the IYFV successfully disseminated knowledge of the nutritional and health benefits of fruit and vegetable consumption and their contribution to diversified, balanced and healthy diets and lifestyles, and fostered dialogue on the need for improved sustainable agricultural practices to ensure more sustainable agrifood systems and to reduce food loss and waste.
4. During its preparation phase in 2020 and throughout the IYFV itself in 2021, the world faced the COVID-19 pandemic, which changed the modalities in which the IYFV could be celebrated. Despite this, awareness on the importance of increased and sustainable fruit and vegetable production and consumption was raised among a wide range of stakeholders, including policymakers, producers, processors and traders, schools, health workers, consumers and the general public.

## II. Outcomes

5. A Global Action Plan (GAP) was prepared in collaboration with the ISC to guide the activities and events to be implemented during the IYFV.
6. The activities of the GAP were organized along four main lines of action:
  - a. Advocacy and Awareness Raising;
  - b. Knowledge Creation and Dissemination;
  - c. Policy Making;
  - d. Capacity Development and Education.
7. FAO rolled out an intensive communications campaign making particular use of social media as well as a designated IYFV website. Promotional videos were prepared for the IYFV Launch Event and Closing Ceremony and for social media. FAO, in partnership with DreamWorks, produced a *Trolls* video incorporating educational information on fruit and vegetables, which was highly disseminated via social media. Other communications activities included digitalization of the technical background paper and the GAP, translation of communications materials and interpretation during official IYFV events.
8. Numerous advocacy events were held worldwide by FAO and its partners as well as by public and private sector entities, research centres and media. More than one hundred worldwide events were posted on the IYFV website.
9. The IYFV Secretariat prepared a background publication entitled: *Fruit and Vegetables – your dietary essentials. The International Year of Fruits and Vegetables, 2021, background paper*. Presented during the IYFV Launch Event, this publication outlined the benefits of fruit and vegetable consumption and examined various aspects of the fruit and vegetable sector from an agrifood systems approach – from sustainable production and trade to loss and waste management.
10. FAO, together with the International Cooperation Centre of Agricultural Research for Development (CIRAD), produced a publication entitled *Fruit and vegetables – Opportunities and challenges for small-scale sustainable farming*, which introduced readers to a diverse array of fruit

and vegetables, citing studies from around the world, raising awareness on the importance of these crops and encouraging readers to take an active role in promoting both their production and consumption.

11. A major success of the IYFV was the vast number of outreach activities, including educational and promotional events, information materials and human-interest stories, organized and/or disseminated worldwide in various languages and for diverse audiences. These significantly contributed to raising the awareness of, and promoting education on, fruit and vegetable consumption and production among all sectors of the population as well as increasing collaboration and partnerships between key players.

12. At the end of the IYFV, contributors reported on the activities that they had conducted. A total of 91 reports were collected: 37 reports on Line of Action One (Advocacy and Awareness Raising), 27 reports on Line of Action Two (Knowledge Creation and Dissemination), 15 reports on Line of Action Three (Policy Making), and 12 reports on Line of Action Four (Capacity Development and Education). These reports are accessible online through the IYFV website.

13. In line with the UNGA Resolution, all activities arising from the implementation of the IYFV were met through voluntary contributions. A multilateral Trust Fund was established to pool funds together in support of the IYFV. The sole donor of the Trust Fund was the Government of Chile.

### **III. Challenges**

14. The COVID-19 pandemic brought a unique set of challenges for the implementation of the IYFV.

15. The pandemic affected the ability to efficiently mobilize resources. Many potential IYFV activities could not be carried out due to lack of funds. It is therefore important to highlight the importance in future years of ensuring a minimum of resource availability well in advance to undertake basic activities related to an international year.

16. Due to restrictions caused directly by the COVID-19 pandemic, most events were held virtually, which required some adaptation. However, virtual events did allow for IYFV activities to be incorporated in a cost-effective way and ensured a high number of participants from all regions.

### **IV. Sustaining momentum beyond closure of the IYFV 2021**

17. The closing ceremony of the IYFV was held virtually on 24 February 2022, where participants expressed agreement to see the momentum of the IYFV carried forward.

18. FAO, governments and all stakeholders are encouraged to continue promoting the messages and themes of the IYFV.

19. FAO will incorporate key themes in the work of the Plant Production and Protection Division (NSP) and the Food and Nutrition Division (ESN) and others, as applicable. FAO will also continue to build on strategic partnerships identified during the IYFV.