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INTRODUCTION

1. The joint initiative by FAO and WHO to convene the International Conference on Nutrition (ICN) was undertaken with the recognition that, notwithstanding the significant progress made worldwide in increasing food supplies and improving nutritional status, the world community continues to fall far short of assuring adequate access by all people to the food they need for good health and nutritional well-being. At the time of the ICN, an estimated 800 million people were unable to obtain sufficient food to meet minimum energy needs, and hundreds of millions were suffering from deficiencies of various micronutrients and diseases caused by contaminated food and water. Increasing public awareness of nutritional problems worldwide, promoting effective strategies and actions to address these problems, and encouraging the political commitment necessary to do so were primary purposes for holding the ICN.

2. When the Member Governments of FAO and WHO met in Rome in December 1992 for the ICN they declared hunger and malnutrition unacceptable in a world with both the knowledge and the resources to eliminate these devastating conditions. Each of the 159 participating countries and the EC re-affirmed their determination to ensure sustained nutritional well-being for all people and committed themselves to intensifying efforts to achieve this goal by unanimously adopting the World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition. The participating UN agencies confirmed their dedication to assist countries in these efforts and to give priority to their nutrition-related activities and programmes.

3. There is much evidence that the ICN has been successful in achieving its primary purposes. Countries overwhelmingly report a resurgence of interest, commitment and activities to improve the nutritional status of their populations. There is equally clear evidence that there is no room for complacency with the progress made to date; much remains to be achieved. Progress in improving food supplies and nutritional well-being continues to bypass many countries and population groups. Access to food remains a serious problem in many countries, even where there are adequate national food supplies. Some countries have even suffered setbacks in their already fragile food and nutrition conditions. In sub-Saharan Africa the situation shows continued deterioration and the prospects for significant improvement are low. Many countries, especially in Africa, continue to face dire food emergencies or highly unstable food supply situations. Furthermore, there are an estimated 16 million refugees and at least another 25 million internally displaced persons. Clearly, the continued, concerted effort of all partners in development is required if the goals of the ICN are to be achieved.

4. The Plan of Action for Nutrition specifically calls for the organizing agencies to monitor and evaluate progress made in implementing the Plan. FAO, since the early preparatory phase of the ICN, has presented periodic reports to the FAO Conference, FAO Council, the FAO Regional Conferences and major FAO Committee meetings. For the preparation of this progress report all Member Governments and relevant agencies of the United Nations were invited to contribute a review and evaluation of their efforts to achieve the ICN goals, assessing in particular the impact that the entire ICN process is having on various policies, programmes and activities to improve nutritional well-being. The response from countries to this request has been strong, with over 70 countries providing progress reports. This report is based on the information contributed by countries and on a review of the national plans which have been submitted to date.

THE RESPONSE TO THE GLOBAL CALL TO ACTION

Review of ICN goals and commitments

5. At the International Conference on Nutrition Member Governments pledged to work, in active cooperation with multilateral, bilateral and non-governmental organizations, the private sector, communities and individuals, to eliminate before the end of this decade:

- famine and famine-related deaths;

- starvation and nutritional deficiencies in communities affected by natural and manmade disasters;
- iodine and vitamin A deficiencies.

Governments also pledged to substantially reduce within the decade:

- starvation and widespread chronic hunger;
- undernutrition, especially among children, women and the aged;
- other micronutrient deficiencies including iron;
- diet-related communicable and non-communicable diseases;
- social and other impediments to optimal breastfeeding;
- inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene, including unsafe drinking-water.

6. The ICN called upon governments to translate this global commitment into country-level activities through development and implementation of national plans of action built on the principles and strategies enunciated in the World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition. It was suggested that national plans be based on an analysis of the country situation and be representative of the needs of all people, with particular emphasis on the most vulnerable groups. Governments were urged to promote community-wide participation and establish coordinated intersectoral mechanisms to develop, implement and monitor execution of these plans, encouraging participation of all relevant ministries, local governments and communities, non-governmental and research organizations and the private sector.

7. The conference stressed that to turn plans into action, allocation and mobilization by government of adequate financial and human resources would be imperative. Recognizing that many countries were lacking needed capacity, it was recommended to give high priority to efforts aimed at strengthening human and institutional resources. The international community was called upon to provide, to the extent their mandates and resources allowed, increased technical and financial support for preparation and implementation of national plans of action. Development agencies were urged to strengthen collaborative mechanisms to fully participate at all levels in the achievement of the goals of the global Plan of Action.

Efforts to turn commitment into action

Intersectoral consultation

8. A primary achievement of the International Conference on Nutrition has been the attainment of a global consensus on the extent, magnitude and causes of malnutrition and on various policies and strategies to bring about long-lasting improvements in nutrition. Apart from its function as an international forum, the conference has also given rise to a widespread mobilization of people at local, national and international levels, to raise awareness, generate ideas and initiate action from a wide range of perspectives to improve the nutritional well-being of all people. It has also provided a unique opportunity to tap on resources, both human and financial, available within various sectors and at several levels of society.

9. The global dialogue initiated at the ICN has become a framework for drawing country and regional action plans, with the ultimate aim of turning commitment into action. In order to arrive at coherent, transparent and, above all, realistic plans of action, many countries are using an intersectoral consultation process. This has often involved establishment of a multisectoral task force, lead by a line ministry, such as health, agriculture or planning, or by a research centre or university. Participants in this consultation process include government ministries and organizations, research institutions, universities, non-governmental organizations, development organizations and the private sector.

10. In many countries, national plans are prepared through a process of alternating sectoral and intersectoral consultations. In addition to establishment of a multisectoral task force, this frequently

requires creation of *ad-hoc* sectoral or thematic working groups and organization of national workshops or seminars. (See Table 1) This approach is maximizing input from key sectors such as agriculture, health, trade and industries and strengthens linkages between those sectors. To maintain and strengthen intersectoral bonds, several countries are reinforcing or proposing to institutionalize their framework for development, implementation and follow-up of food and nutrition plans and programmes in order to continue dialogue on topical food and nutrition issues on a more permanent and formal basis.

11. In many countries like Burkina Faso, Benin, Ecuador and Peru ICN follow-up is providing a unique opportunity for non-governmental organizations, academia and the private sector to participate in national planning. Their participation is enhancing community participation in national planning and enabling planners to adopt more need-oriented and target-group based approaches. Exchange of information and joint planning is reinforcing momentum of both public and private sector programmes. In some countries, increased people's participation is being pursued through development of district and local level plans of action often using local food and nutrition committees. In only a small minority of countries, development of a national plan has been a central planning exercise, with only minimal involvement of non-governmental organizations and the private sector. In general, participation of industry in preparation of national plans of action has been limited.

National plans of action and other mechanisms to achieve ICN goals

12. At present (July 1995) 105 countries world-wide are preparing or have completed national plans of action for nutrition; 24 countries report having completed a national plan, 55 are in the stage of revising a draft plan and 26 are in the preliminary phase. In the last group, plan formulation has been hampered by various causes, including lack of local capacity, inadequate institutional arrangements, lack of resources or political turmoil.

13. In a number of countries (Kenya, the Philippines, Dominican Republic, Viet Nam, Zaire) national plans of action for nutrition are being adopted by the highest Government authorities and have become truly national plans. In other countries, plans are being adopted by one or several line ministries without further referral to higher political levels. Indonesia for example has made a conscious decision not to develop a national plan, but is rather addressing nutrition problems through other national development planning exercises. In several industrialized countries like Ireland, Singapore and France, nutrition is being addressed primarily through existing health plans. In these countries, national plans may still be needed to address problems of food insecurity among ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups.

14. Many countries, in addition to preparing national plans of action for nutrition, are using other mechanisms to achieve ICN goals. These include existing national food and nutrition policies (Western Samoa, Chile, Mexico, Uganda, Solomon Islands), five-year development plans (Indonesia, Iran, Pakistan, Cambodia), national programmes of action for children (Lesotho, China, Namibia) or a national hunger campaign like in Brazil. However, despite the wide array of planning processes employed in developing countries, impact of existing programmes is often curtailed by lack of local capacity, resources and coordination. Countries report that insufficient awareness and understanding of nutrition problems among policy-makers and planners is resulting in inadequate resource allocations to food and nutrition programmes and neglect of strengthening local capacity and intersectoral coordination.

15. Development of national plans relies heavily on information gathered and analyses made in the course of the ICN process. In particular, preparation of country papers and organization of national seminars have allowed planners in the formal and informal sectors to review existing food and nutrition programmes, assess their impact in the light of efforts and investments made and re-prioritize issues and select appropriate strategies in the broadened nutrition context created by the

ICN. Many countries propose to further develop and expand the information generated through the ICN and increase accessibility to potential users. As an immediate output, country reviews and analyses are resulting in increased recognition and understanding of the complementarity between various sectoral programmes. This is clearly reflected in the many national plans of action that consolidate sectoral efforts into comprehensive plans with increased visibility and leading to greater efficiency and impact. However, country experience shows that to turn national plans of action into useful programme guides, they need to be integrated at some stage in regular national and sectoral planning and budgeting cycles.⁴

Increased commitment for activities to improve nutrition

16. The ICN continues to yield important levels of commitment to intensify efforts to protect and promote nutritional well-being. This is clearly reflected in the number of people being mobilized, the amount of time and resources spent and the level of technical and financial assistance contributed by various ministries, institutions, agencies and non-governmental organizations. In several countries commitment is not only being translated into development of national plans of action, but is also resulting in a redirection of activities of concerned line ministries (Ghana, Laos, Iran) or even establishment of new institutions or ministries to address food and nutrition issues (Indonesia). Many non-governmental organizations are also taking up their responsibility through the integration of nutrition considerations and components into their programmes and projects.

17. In a majority of countries, ICN continues to have a multiplier effect on efforts to involve communities and the people themselves in activities to improve nutritional status. Some governments envisage to develop provincial or district plans of action for nutrition (Cuba, Burkina Faso, Argentina, Kenya, Uganda), while others, like Cambodia, are enhancing people's participation in programme implementation through establishment of committees for intersectoral cooperation and rural development at these or even lower levels

18. Country experience further shows that there is a synergetic effect between efforts to raise public awareness and actions to generate necessary political commitment. In the Philippines, for example, where the ICN is resulting in increased activities to improve nutrition, the National Nutrition Council has received authority from the President and is supported by a network of organizations and institutions allowing broad community and institutional participation in both assessment and planning. This is resulting in an equally broad involvement in implementation and follow-up of the national plan of action.

Support from development agencies for ICN follow-up activities

19. The ICN has encouraged and enhanced partnerships among development agencies to work collaboratively towards common goals, and particularly so at the country level. Considering the overlapping mandates of many development partners, greater attention is needed to seek out opportunities to assist countries in developing complementary approaches to address food and nutrition problems in a sustainable manner, while avoiding duplication of effort. While FAO and WHO have strengthened their areas of collaborative work, increased coordination among development partners needs to be encouraged, particularly among UN agencies, to support their unique role in building national capacity to address food and nutrition problems.

20. FAO and WHO continue to provide considerable support to national and regional efforts to implement the ICN goals. Both organizations are giving technical and financial assistance for development of national plans of action and are actively promoting intersectoral consultation in favour of nutrition. To facilitate implementation of national plans, FAO and WHO are also making serious efforts to increase local capacity to turn plans into operational proposals. At present (July 1995) FAO has provided assistance to over 90 countries world-wide through support to national consultants and workshops and technical assistance from Headquarters and regional offices. In

total, FAO along with UNDP has provided 1.5 million dollars to countries to support ICN follow-up activities. (See Table 1)

21. Countries are indicating that resource mobilization for plan implementation can best be achieved through national and inter-agency coordinating bodies. National efforts to promote intersectoral coordination and mobilize resources are resulting in an increased demand from ministries and agencies for strengthened inter-agency cooperation. This is expected to result in substantial savings and increased budget allocations for nutrition by aligning programmes and increasing visibility of nutrition in the overall development framework. In the past, UN and other agencies have participated in national task forces, intersectoral committees and other national food and nutrition coordinating mechanisms. At present, many countries, such as Ghana, Lesotho, and Syria, are establishing a schedule for regular inter-agency consultations and as a result collaboration between FAO, WHO, UNICEF and other development organizations in the area of food and nutrition has increased substantially. In some countries (Lesotho, Namibia and Sudan), nutrition has become a key issue in the development of a Country Strategy Note prepared by UNDP.

22. At regional and sub-regional levels FAO and WHO are working together to strengthen technical cooperation, identify constraints and share experiences in implementation of ICN recommendations. To this end, both agencies have organized or supported a number of inter-country meetings and workshops (See Table 2). Countries are explicitly requesting increased regional and sub-regional cooperation and clearly defined programmes, based on regional issues emerging from national plans.

23. Both agencies continue to play a major catalytic role in sustaining the ICN process. As countries now reach the stage where plans need to be implemented, it becomes increasingly important to support these country initiatives through an intensification of relevant normative and operational activities. FAO is, therefore, intensifying its assistance to member countries to improve food security, fight micronutrient deficiencies and improve food quality and safety through concrete actions in the areas of food, agriculture, forestry, fisheries and sustainable development. The organization is actively promoting and pursuing integration of nutrition components and considerations throughout its programmes. FAO is further providing food and nutrition monitoring, evaluation and information services and policy advice to member countries and concerned agencies. Through participation in numerous international, regional and national fora, the organization is actively advocating development and application of food and agriculture based approaches to alleviate poverty and malnutrition.

24. WHO has strengthened its capacity to assist Member States by drawing up a strategy to support implementation of ICN recommendations and merging the units of food aid programmes, food safety and nutrition into a Division of Food and Nutrition. Working groups on ICN strategy areas have been established and the nutrition task force continues to facilitate collaboration with and support by the new division. It also acts as a forum for consultation on working group activities, thereby promoting a comprehensive and integrated approach towards nutrition. WHO continues its important normative work, reviewing scientific data and developing norms, criteria and guidelines on a wide range of nutrition issues. WHO is actively involved in assessment and monitoring of nutrition situations world-wide and manages several regional databases on food composition and nutrition policies.

25. Other UN agencies and development organizations are also providing considerable support to implement the ICN goals. In many countries, UNICEF has taken an active role in assisting in the formulation of national plans of action for nutrition and other nutrition programmes. A good example of FAO - UNICEF cooperation can be seen in Malawi, where each agency has provided technical assistance to strengthen national capacity to develop the national plan of action and related programmes. As poverty alleviation and nutrition improvement are core objectives of IFAD's programme, the organization assists countries through various regular programme activities. The

organization reports that it has developed a strategy for improving nutrition through rural investment projects and operational methodologies for project design and monitoring to strengthen household food security and nutrition in poverty alleviation projects.

26. The World Bank reports that since the ICN it has provided substantial loans for projects on nutrition or with major nutrition components (in the areas of education, population and health, agriculture, and infrastructure). While the impetus within the Bank for promoting nutrition programmes may not have arisen from the ICN, clearly the enthusiasm on the part of recipient countries to address nutrition has been greatly influenced by their involvement in the ICN process. IAEA indicates that it has increased resource allocations for implementing national plans of action for nutrition and strengthened its technical capacity in nutrition. IAEA is also undertaking research on nutrition and micronutrients and technical cooperation projects on dietary diversification and traditional foods. UNU is giving increased attention to research on prevention of iron deficiency and supplementation strategies. It is focusing on improved food composition information and supporting a worldwide network of regional institutions and data bases to enhance quality and availability of food composition data in developing countries. UNU and FAO have strengthened their collaboration in this area.

27. UNEP is contributing to increased food security through programmes on integrated pest management. In collaboration with FAO, it is assisting countries to prevent and control contamination of food with mycotoxin through training and other capacity building programmes. Much attention is given to exchange of information on contamination levels to increase foreign exchange earnings by preventing rejection of foods for export. WFP reports that its country programmes are being guided by national plans of action and increased attention is being given to building food security safety nets. Micronutrient components are being included in food aid and school feeding programmes. In several countries like Myanmar, Laos and Paraguay, UNDP is coordinating assistance provided by UN agencies in the preparation of national plans of action, while in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal and Eritrea, it has provided support through its TSS-1 programme.

28. To reinforce country activities, some bilateral agencies have brought their national development assistance plans in line with the ICN recommendations and have responded to requests to strengthen country programmes for ICN follow-up. For example, Canada and the USA are providing assistance in the development of strategies and programmes to reduce vitamin A, iron and iodine deficiencies. Denmark reports that its development agency is integrating nutrition considerations into sectoral development assistance programmes including health, fisheries, forestry and agriculture. Belgium indicates that it is contributing through existing national programmes for development assistance, including international agricultural research and training in agriculture, food science and nutrition. Other countries, such as France, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom and the USA, have provided technical assistance through the APO programme.

29. It is important to note that a large number of countries, through their national plans of action and other mechanisms, are requesting organizations and agencies to bring their development programmes in line with the goals and strategies of the World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition. For example, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Zambia have obtained World Bank funding for implementing specific activities of their national plan of action.

A SELECTIVE REVIEW OF NATIONAL ACTION PLANS

30. To date, 49 national plans of action have been submitted to FAO, along with 71 reports assessing country activities and progress in achieving the ICN goals. The plans reviewed focus on a wide range of issues and represent a country-specific selection of goals and strategy options. This review concentrates on themes and issues most closely related to the food and agricultural sectors. Most plans are modelled along the themes and major policy guidelines of the global Plan of Action

and provide an overall framework to improve nutrition from a multisectoral perspective. A minority of countries have gone beyond the level of outlining broad-based strategies and programmes and are preparing detailed programme and project outlines, including precise time-frames, attainable goals and realistic budgets (Cuba, Guinea, Laos, the Philippines, Western Samoa, Namibia). However, at this stage, most of the draft or final plans which have been prepared do not elaborate the specific activities or identify the necessary resources to implement the strategies or programmes they have outlined.

31. Most countries are identifying concrete goals for improving national food and nutrition situations within a given time-frame, mostly before the year 2000. For the most part, specific activities to achieve those goals have been identified but have not yet been sufficiently outlined for implementation. Recurring objectives include: increases in daily energy supply above or up to a certain level; reductions in child malnutrition; reduction or elimination of prevalence of vitamin A, iodine and iron deficiencies; reductions in food-borne diseases and in contamination and adulteration of food; increases in food trade; adoption of food laws, regulations and standards; and coverage rates for nutrition monitoring of vulnerable groups.

32. While national plans of action reflect a rich variety in country and sector-specific approaches toward nutrition, there is a remarkable recurrence of specific issues within and between plans. The majority of developing countries indicate that they urgently need assistance to increase local capacity to formulate, implement and monitor food and nutrition activities. Many countries, particularly in Africa, recognize the weakness of the food security component in their national plans of action and indicate that comprehensive food security programmes are required, incorporating measures to increase food supplies, improve food quality and safety, reduce micronutrient deficiencies and provide food and nutrition information and early warning services. From the plans and country reports, it can be concluded that countries now recognize the fundamental role of agriculture in improving nutrition, but have difficulty in translating this understanding into specific activities in the food and agricultural sectors and in integrating nutrition considerations into agricultural development programmes. Countries indicate that intensified support from FAO will be needed to fully address these issues.

Incorporating nutrition components and considerations into development plans and programmes

33. Countries indicate that existing coordinating bodies for integrating nutrition in development plans and programs frequently lack adequate capacity and resources and the proliferation of *ad-hoc* bodies and committees to enhance intersectoral cooperation and coordination often leads to dispersion of already scarce resources and capacity. Many countries, therefore, express the need to strengthen existing coordination mechanisms to increase long-term impact of development programmes on nutrition. Countries like Kenya, Namibia, Myanmar and Western Samoa foresee establishing an umbrella organization to support intersectoral collaboration and provide technical assistance in policy formulation, programme development, implementation and monitoring. These organizations are expected to function as vehicles for integration of nutrition into overall and sectoral plans and programmes and have a major role in dissemination of relevant food and nutrition information.

34. Examples of efforts to enhance nutrition impact of development programmes are the Philippines and Sudan, which are outlining training activities to improve the capacity of line ministries and other relevant organizations at national and local levels to integrate nutrition components and considerations in their programmes. Mauritania and other countries have planned to develop manuals and training modules. Many countries also indicate that planners and policy-makers lack awareness and understanding of prevailing food and nutrition problems and mechanisms to address them. The Philippines, Western Samoa and Sudan, therefore, propose nutrition advocacy as a tool to sensitize policy-makers and planners to consider nutrition in sectoral plans and programmes. Nutritional impact assessment should provide useful evidence for policy

advocacy of how nutritional improvements contribute to higher returns on other social investments (schooling) and to increased agricultural productivity. To enhance the reformulation of relevant policy recommendations, countries need to strengthen their capacity to assess the impact of development policies and programmes on nutrition. Policy assessment should allow the identification of policy changes needed to strengthen positive effects on nutrition, and mitigate negative effects; this in turn should also contribute to a more coherent national policy framework and intersectoral policy coordination.

35. Benin and several other countries point out that official adoption of national plans of action and recognition by relevant development agencies are critical in the acceptance of nutrition as an essential component and impact indicator of development programmes. Countries, therefore, urge development agencies to integrate nutrition considerations and components into development assistance programmes. In developed countries, incorporating nutrition components and considerations into national policies and programmes mainly entails building linkages between consumers, producers, policy-makers and legislators. Some countries indicate that policy-makers and legislators need to create the enabling environment to allow farmers and food industry to make foods available at affordable prices that are consistent with dietary guidelines, while at the same time maintaining or increasing commercial competitiveness in a manner consistent with an ecologically sustainable development.

Ensuring household food security

36. Most national plans provide general policy guidelines and recommendations for integrating nutrition and food security components and considerations into development plans and programmes, rather than outlining well-defined macro-level and sector-specific activities. Many developing countries have expressed their need for comprehensive food security plans and programmes, and support through programmes such as the Special Programme on Food Production in Support of Food Security in Low-Income Food-Deficit Countries. The strategies proposed in their national plans of action are as numerous and diverse as the underlying causes. Only a few countries like Namibia and Viet Nam are using the opportunity provided by the ICN to develop comprehensive policies and action programmes for food security and nutrition. Ecuador, Venezuela and others anticipate to prepare such national policies and programmes as an activity under the national plan of action for nutrition.

37. In identifying strategies and priority areas of action for ensuring food security, Sudan, Tanzania and other countries refer to existing national food security policies and guidelines on poverty alleviation, food security and child survival. In general, these policies cover a wide scope of strategy options, ranging from application of macro-economic management tools as pricing mechanisms, production and consumption subsidies, incentives, minimum wages and budget deficit controls, to more sector-specific approaches as development and transfer of agricultural technology, agricultural research and extension, environmental protection and agro-industrial development.

38. Other activities include establishing or strengthening food security and nutrition units in specific line ministries and institutions, whose core objective is to provide assistance in policy and programme formulation, impact assessment and evaluation. These units are also expected to assume responsibility for monitoring of food security and nutrition situations. Sudan, Viet Nam and other countries envisage supporting policy and programme development through establishment or improvement of early warning and information systems for food and nutrition. More action-oriented programmes involve development of physical infrastructure, reduction of post-harvest losses, seed multiplication, aquaculture development, agro-forestry, home and school gardening. It is important to note that, through the development of national plans of action, nutrition components and considerations are being incorporated into these activities, thus enhancing their impact, while, at the same time, allowing assessment of their bearing on nutrition.

39. Among developed countries the issue of food security is not explicitly addressed, as their plans focus mainly on food safety, dietary habits and health-related aspects of nutrition. Australia and New Zealand indicate that food security entails adoption of environmentally sustainable agricultural practices in an increasingly competitive international trade environment. They identify the need to assess the extent and analyse the causes of food insecurity among minority and vulnerable groups and to develop criteria for assessing patterns and levels of household food insecurity. New Zealand notes the strategic importance of food security in the face of events that would prevent or inhibit food imports or greatly reduce the country's food supply.

40. It is important to note that several countries (Namibia, Madagascar and Lesotho) are building linkages in their national plans of action between strategies to ensure food security and approaches to combat micronutrient deficiencies or improve food quality and safety. This clearly reflects the understanding that activities such as agricultural diversification, promotion of small-scale agro-industries, food processing, preservation and marketing, school and home gardening and nutrition education have the potential to contribute to improved food security.

Protecting consumers through improved food quality and safety

41. In many developing and newly industrialized countries, improving food quality and safety has become a priority area of action to ensure adequate consumer protection and enhance domestic and international trade. National plans of action include strategies to overcome constraints in local capacity ranging from strengthening of national food control infrastructure (including institutions, legal framework, human resources and inspection services) to training of food producers, processors and handlers, consumer education and information.

42. In the majority of developing countries, manpower development and training for food control personnel, industry and trade are raised as priority areas of action. In this context, reference is made to the need to strengthen regional training efforts and institutions. Many countries, particularly in Africa, also give great importance to the nutritional and economic value of traditional foods and their plans outline strategies to develop and improve processing and storage techniques for indigenous foods.

43. Many countries in Asia and some regions of Africa recognize the economic and nutritional impact of the informal food sector. Their national plans of action provide specific strategies to improve, control and monitor food quality and safety in this sector. In this respect, Egypt, Sudan and Western Samoa among others, raise the issue of providing access to potable water at household level and adequate infrastructure at street food vending sites as an important concern.

44. In view of increased trade liberalization world-wide, a majority of countries emphasize the need to strengthen food quality control activities for import and export purposes. This is expected to provide an adequate framework for expansion of food control and other consumer protection services to domestic markets. Countries like Egypt, Lesotho, Western Samoa, Myanmar, Hungary and Cambodia and many others give much attention to development and promulgation of food laws, regulations and standards which are internationally recognized, while several developed and most developing countries foresee introducing or strengthening certification of food products, quality systems and laboratories.

45. In developed countries, much importance is given to food labelling and food composition activities. In the latter area, activities to strengthen regional food composition database networks are anticipated. Equally important is the promotion of food quality systems such as HACCP in the European Union and other industrialized countries through training and information programmes.

46. Many countries are developing special legal instruments to regulate food fortification. Madagascar, Côte d'Ivoire, Myanmar, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Swaziland and Lesotho

have outlined food control measures to support fortification of foods with micronutrients and in particular iodization of salt.

Combating micronutrient deficiencies

47. National plans of action and country reports indicate that activities to combat micronutrient deficiencies are ongoing in many developing countries. Much work has been done by UNICEF and other agencies on the control and prevention of iodine deficiency disorders through the iodization of salt and the enactment and enforcement of relevant legislation. In the past, work on vitamin A and iron deficiencies has mainly focused on supplementation and to a lesser extent on fortification and agricultural based approaches. In selecting specific strategies to combat micronutrient deficiencies, most countries indicate that supplementation efforts should gradually be phased out and replaced by more sustainable food-based actions such as diversifying and increasing production, processing and marketing of foods rich in or fortified with specific micronutrients.

48. To support the application of food-based approaches, countries like Kenya, Benin and the Philippines are planning training on various strategy options and aspects related to food technology and quality control. Other developing countries like Cambodia and the Dominican Republic indicate that nutrition education and training of agricultural extension workers on food based approaches and health workers on assessment of nutritional deficiency disorders are critical to long-term elimination of micronutrient and other nutritional deficiencies. Cuba, Laos, Viet Nam, Nicaragua and Bolivia have outlined programmes for agricultural and dietary diversification to increase availability and consumption of micronutrient rich foods and are also promoting food fortification. Australia and several other countries are developing dietary guidelines, recommending consumption of foods rich in specific micronutrients.

49. Kenya, Morocco and Mauritania emphasize that apart from vitamin A, iron and iodine, other micronutrients like vitamins D and C, zinc and calcium should receive greater attention. These and other countries argue that the extent and severity of specific micronutrient deficiencies is insufficiently known and priority should be given to situation assessment and analysis to allow development of appropriate strategies.

Assessing, analysing and monitoring food and nutrition situations

50. It is evident from country reports and national plans that existing programmes and systems for the collection and analysis of food and nutrition information need to be enhanced in order to effectively monitor the impact of plans and activities for nutrition. Many countries express the need to develop appropriate sampling and analytical methodology and review indicators, coverage rates, time-lags between data collection and dissemination, access to data, data quality and relevancy. Recognizing the lack of coordination amid the enormous wealth of food and nutrition related data, industrialized countries like Australia and Denmark plan to establish a national coordinated mechanism for food and nutrition monitoring.

51. Several countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia plan on strengthening existing national capacities for data collection, analysis and dissemination and advocate increased coordination and cooperation between various food and nutrition information systems to optimize resource utilization and improve information quality and relevancy. They plan to improve existing nutrition information systems, covering information on nutritional status of vulnerable groups, to also include food security and other relevant indicators. Training of relevant personnel, increasing community participation and enhancing sustainability of information systems are also recognized as important. In this respect, countries like the Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, the Philippines and Sudan propose to establish local systems for nutrition surveillance and early warning, adapted to the local context and needs.

TURNING PLANS INTO ACTION: THE CHALLENGE AHEAD

52. Success in implementing the World Plan of Action for Nutrition will depend on a number of measures being taken by countries and agencies concerning institutional arrangements and substantive issues. As a matter of priority, countries need to integrate national plans of action for nutrition into regular national and sectoral development planning and budgeting cycles. This is critical to secure national commitment and resources and will enhance visibility of plans and nutrition in the overall development framework. The latter will be of great help to mobilize resources from bilateral and multilateral development agencies. However, as a prerequisite to obtain commitment and resources for effective implementation, the present plans of action will have to be made operational. To this end countries will need to focus on selected key areas of action without losing the overall perspective of the plan. This will require the development of detailed project proposals or periodic operational plans, including specific timeframes, attainable targets and realistic budgets. Several countries, including some of the poorest, have already reached this stage and will need significant technical and financial support for full implementation.

53. To ensure the effective implementation of national plans with full participation of all sectors, countries should also consider to:

- undertake institutional reforms to effectively integrate policy formulation with local-level planning and implementation;
- promote development and implementation of participatory methodologies in local-level planning;
- promote participation of the private sector as a partner in the implementation of the plans through national consensus building involving the public sector, NGOs and grass-roots organizations;
- build-in monitoring mechanisms in national plans that generate information on a continuous basis, transforming the implementation process into a constant learning process; and
- identify high priority areas where multisectoral actions are to be implemented to exploit synergisms in producing better nutrition.

54. Equally important is the reinforcement of existing programmes related to food and nutrition. This will involve aligning to the maximum extent possible existing programmes in various areas toward the common goals of ensuring food security and improving nutrition. Doing so will require increased coordination and intensified cooperation among national ministries and organizations and bilateral and multilateral development partners. Since national and inter-agency coordinating bodies have a critical and catalytic role in this respect, their capacity to address food and nutrition issues will need to be strengthened in many countries.

55. In the wake of the ICN, countries are adopting broad-based nutrition strategies which now need to be translated into concrete, precise and targeted actions. Through their plans and progress reports, many developing countries are requesting assistance to build necessary local capacity to formulate, implement and monitor such activities, particularly in the area of food security. Technical development agencies have an important responsibility to assist countries in developing relevant skills and strengthening institutional arrangements and infrastructure to address these issues in a comprehensive way. Their guidance on project formulation and evaluation will also be required, as well as assistance in establishing the impact of development activities on nutrition.

56. In line with countries' need for comprehensive food security programmes, FAO is promoting broad-based agricultural development both as a source of food to meet the nutritional needs of a rapidly expanding world population and as a means to improve access to food and other basic goods through income and employment generation. Recognizing the particular needs of a large number of developing countries, FAO has initiated a Special Programme on Food Production in Support of Food Security in Low-Income Food-Deficit Countries (LIFDCs). The main goal of the programme is to assist LIFDCs in rapidly increasing their food production, farm productivity and access to food

through employment generation. The programme, initiated on a pilot-basis in a limited number of countries, focuses on promotion of improved production technologies and better water control for major staple crops.

57. The need to address world food security in a comprehensive way at the highest level, in order to raise awareness and political will and secure concerted international action, has led the Director-General to propose the convening of a World Food Summit where world leaders would have the opportunity to examine the present situation and the future outlook, and agree on appropriate policies and actions. The Council, at its 108th Session, supported the initiative and recommended that the Conference approve the convening of the Summit in 1996. The Summit should address food security as a strategic, political and economic issue, with the ultimate aim of protecting and promoting the nutritional well-being of all people. Issues of particular importance include: the ethical basis of food security; linkages between poverty, food insecurity and under-development; determinants of physical and economic access to food; biodiversity, indigenous foods and natural resource management; external debt; commodity diversification; the role of agriculture and rural development in national economies; research and technology transfer; and the overriding importance of peace and political stability.

58. The Summit is expected to make more explicit and operational the obvious but not always straight-forward linkages between agricultural development, food production and nutrition. This will greatly enhance efforts to make policy-makers and planners more aware of the impact of their decisions and actions on nutrition and enable them to develop comprehensive plans and programmes to bring about long-lasting improvements in food security and nutrition. Building on the momentum of the ICN and other international conferences, the World Food Summit should provide a timely opportunity to turn plans and declarations into action.

ANNEXES

TABLE 1
Status of NPAN preparation and FAO support

	Africa	Asia & the Pacific	Latin America & the Caribbean	Near East	North America & Europe	Global
Final NPANs	7	6	5	4	2	24
Draft NPANs	21	11	14	4	5	55
NPANs in preparation	9	5	7	3	2	26
National seminars & workshops	28	10	15	5	4	62
Multisectoral Committees	33	14	18	5	4	74
TCP projects - ICN follow-up in US\$1 000	2	1	-	1	-	4
	294	115	-	56	-	465
TSS1 projects -ICN follow-up in US\$1 000	1	3	-	-	-	4
	87.78	341	-	-	-	428.78
Letters of Agreement - ICN follow-up in US\$1 000	17	7	18	5	3	50
	220.5	140	159.5	39.5	45	604.5
APOs on ICN follow-up	5	4	2	-	-	11
Country progress reports on ICN follow-up	27	15	13	5	11	71

TABLE 2
Major regional and sub-regional ICN follow-up meetings

Region & No. of participating countries	Dates	Venue
Africa		
FAO/WHO/UNICEF Seminar on Food & Nutrition Surveillance & ICN Follow-up - Lusophone Africa (5)	May 1993	Bissau, Guinea Bissau
FAO/WHO/USAID Africa Meeting - sponsors: ECSA & Government of Kenya (17)	December 1993	Nairobi, Kenya
Sub-Regional Workshop - Anglophone Africa (20)	April 1995	Harare, Zimbabwe
Sub-Regional Workshop - Francophone Africa (21)	July 1995	Cotonou, Benin
Asia and the Pacific		
FAO Regional Expert Consultation on Household Food Security 'Asia-Pacific Network - Food and Nutrition' (9)	June 1993	Bangkok, Thailand
FAO/WHO Sub-Regional Workshop - South Pacific Islands (7)	October 1994	Nadi, Fiji
Sub-Regional Workshop - Asia (11)	March 1995	New Delhi, India
Latin America and the Caribbean		
FAO/WHO Sub-Regional Workshop - South America (10)	March 1994	Quito, Ecuador
FAO/WHO Sub-Regional Workshop - Central America (10)	October 1993	Tegucigalpa, Honduras
FAO/WHO Sub-Regional Workshop - Anglophone Caribbean (11)	December 1994	Kingston, Jamaica
Sub-Regional Workshop - Non-Governmental Organizations	November 1995	Lima, Peru
Near East		
FAO/WHO Sub-Regional Workshop - Near East (11)	September 1994	Alexandria, Egypt
Sub-Regional Workshop - Gulf Countries (6)	May 1995	Dubai, United Arab Emirates