FAO Food systems-based dietary guidelines (FSBDGs) methodology: Need, principles and approach

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Malnutrition

The Problem & Opportunity

- As many as **783 million** people are undernourished
- Over **2 billion** people are affected by micronutrient deficiencies
- Malnutrition is an underlying cause in **nearly half** of all deaths of children under 5 years of age
- **676 million people** are obese
- Diet related NCDs are responsible for **74%** of all deaths worldwide

Source: SOFI 2023
Food systems’ challenges

Source: SOFI 2020
Nutrition, diets and food systems

Good nutrition **starts** with what we eat, making healthy diets a cornerstone solution for addressing all forms of malnutrition. In addition, as the HLPE (2016) notes, "(diets) interact with food systems, not only as an outcome of existing food systems but also as a driver of change for future food systems."
Dietary Guidelines

Over 100 countries have described, **what healthy diets are in their context** through the development of dietary guidelines.
What are dietary guidelines?

**Evidence-based** recommendations that **outline** what a healthy diet represents in a country.

Country-specific, developed **based on** best available evidence, and an analysis of the context (health and nutrition situation).

They are **popularly recognized** by simple messages and a graphic (food guide).

Generally used to inform consumers disseminated through communication products or in food and nutrition education.

Potential to “**inform and guide policymaker actions not simply to inform or encourage individuals**” – GLOPAN 2020
The need for new guidance

- Support to countries
- Criticism of current dietary guidelines
- Interest on sustainability of diets
- Survey
- Gaps/Innovations
Changes and Innovations

What’s new in the upcoming FAO Food systems-based dietary guidelines methodology?
STRENGTHENED and INNOVATIVE ELEMENTS of the new FSBDG guidance

ANCHORED IN A FOOD SYSTEMS APPROACH

INTEGRATING SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS
Conceptual frameworks
Concept of healthy diets from sustainable food systems

They are dietary patterns that promote all dimensions of individual health and well-being.

Contribute to prevent all types of malnutrition and support the maintenance of planetary health.

Are accessible, affordable, safe, equitable and culturally acceptable.

Must combine all the dimensions of sustainability to avoid unintended consequences.

Source: Sustainable healthy diets: Guiding principles. FAO/WHO, 2019
The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Source: HLPE 2020
Theory of change

ASSUMPTIONS

> A political will and commitment from relevant entities to support the development or revision of the FSBDGs and to implement them exists.

> Sufficient and continuous human and financial resources and time are allocated to develop, revise and implement the FSBDGs.

> An enabling environment for multisectoral and multidisciplinary collaboration and coordination exists to jointly develop, revise and implement the FSBDGs across the food system.

> Openness and willingness to undertake the process in a transparent way, with clear principles of engagement and with continuous monitoring and evaluation.

> FSBDGs influence directly and coherently the goals and instruments of national food-related policies, investments and action plans across the food system.
Stages to Develop & Implement FSBDG

STAGE 1.
Design and plan the national process

STAGE 2.
Analyse the situation and review the evidence

STAGE 3.
Develop recommended dietary patterns and formulate the multilevel technical recommendations

STAGE 4.
Develop a food-systems wide implementation strategy

STAGE 5.
Design capacity development and communication actions

STAGE 6.
Implement, monitor and evaluate

Targeted food system analysis

Source: FAO forthcoming
There is growing international demand that DGs integrate sustainability considerations. This is not an option but a need.

DGs need to be better developed with a solid anchor in evidence and with a wider scope. Also better communicated, implemented, used and evaluated to unpack their potential.

Over 100 countries have developed DGs. Evidence is scarce on the impact of these efforts in terms of behavioural change and this is partly due to the way they have been developed, implemented and used.

FAO is currently finalizing a new FSBDGs methodology, with step-by-step guidance to achieve the potential of DG to promote healthy diets for all and to contribute to the transformation of food systems.
Thank you very much!

For more information, contact us at: Email: dietary-guidelines@fao.org