

***The cost and affordability of a healthy diet: data and analysis to inform agrifood systems transformation***

CFS 50 Side Event

Organized by FAO and the Permanent Representation of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia to FAO

Monday 10 October 2022, 13:30-14:45 Rome time

**Summary**

**I. Background**

One of the key reasons why millions of people are food insecure and malnourished around the world is because healthy diets are out of reach and unaffordable. Since 2020, FAO has been updating the Cost and Affordability of a Healthy Diet (CoAHD) indicators, with the aim of providing global evidence about the economic access to nutritious foods to meet dietary needs for an active and healthy life, one of the core principles embedded in the definition of food security. The CoAHD indicators have been able to provide crucial information for national governments, international agencies, civil society and the private sector, setting the base to work together towards improved economic access to healthy diets and achieve longstanding goals for global food security, nutrition and health.

In the 2022 edition of [\*The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World\*](#), it has been reported that almost 3.1 billion people could not afford a healthy diet in 2020. This is an increase of 112 million compared to 2019. Considering the increasing trend in international food prices registered since 2021, the economic access to healthy diets is turning into an important topic in the global policy agenda. Developing evidence-based policies to reduce the cost and improve the affordability of healthy diets is becoming a relevant challenge for governments: sharing experiences at the regional and national level could contribute in supporting policy dialogues and collaboration towards the objective of making healthy diets affordable for all.

In addition, making healthy diets less costly and more affordable has increased its relevance in the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) agenda, and has become a key element of the agrifood systems transformation discussion. The benefits that healthy diets can trigger not only for reducing hunger and malnutrition, but also regarding climate and health objectives, provide an important linkage between many of the CFS policy discussions. In the current scenario, where achieving many of the SDGs seems harder than ever, the promotion of healthy diets provides an unique opportunity to be again on track towards the 2030 SDG targets.

The CFS 50 Side Event ***The cost and affordability of a healthy diet: data and analysis to inform agrifood systems transformation*** shared regional and national experiences regarding the use of CoAHD data, and the implementation of policies for increasing the availability and improving the affordability of nutritious foods as part of the main national efforts towards the transformation of agrifood systems. The panel discussion provided an opportunity to hear directly from Regional Bodies and Member State representatives about regional and national initiatives, perspectives, challenges and progress, increasing the visibility of the affordability of healthy diets in the policy agenda, and creating opportunities for further collaborations among different stakeholders.

## II. Event and Panelists' interventions

**Cindy Holleman**, Senior Economist and Editor of *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World* in the Agrifood Economics Division of FAO moderated the event.

**H.E. Demitu Hambisa Bonga**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, shared opening remarks regarding the global challenges for food security and nutrition, and experiences about how Ethiopia is investing in food and agriculture, with the scope of achieving food security and nutrition and making healthy diets affordable.

**Marco V. Sánchez Cantillo**, Deputy Director of the Agrifood Economics Division of FAO, made an introductory intervention about the FAO's work in filling the knowledge gap about the economic access to nutritious foods, through the CoAHD indicators, and the key role they can play in informing governments for the formulation of evidence-based policies to make healthy diets affordable. Finally, it has been indicated that FAO is ready to support national governments in this area.

**Shaun Baugh**, Programme Manager of the Agricultural and Agro-Industrial Development at the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat, explained the current challenges of food insecurity and nutrition and healthy diets' availability in the Caribbean, and shared the most recent initiatives that CARICOM has implemented to address these challenges.

**Nazeer Ahmad**, Chief of the Nutrition Section at the Ministry of Planning Development and Special Initiatives of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, shared the latest results of CoAHD indicators, estimated by the government at the national and subnational levels, which makes Pakistan one of the first countries in the world to incorporate CoAHD into their national statistics system.

**Stevier Kaiyatsa**, Principal Economist at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs of the Republic of Malawi, and Ph.D student in Economics at the University of Sheffield in the United Kingdom, discussed the experience of Malawi in implementing the CANDASA project, led by Tufts University and IFPRI, in the country between 2018 and 2020. Its implementation allowed the country to calculate national estimates of the cost of nutritious foods, and has been used to inform national humanitarian and social protection programmes.

**Natasha Beerjit-Deonarine**, Director of Planning at Ministry of Agriculture of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, presented the current food security and nutrition situation in Guyana, the strategy that the national government is following to address these challenges, and the plans for estimating CoAHD indicators at the national and subnational level in the next years.

**Lynnette Neufeld**, Director of the Food and Nutrition Division of FAO made closing remarks highlighting the relationship between nutrition and healthy diets, and the importance of the regional and national experiences shared in the Side Event to scale-up the use of reliable national data for policy formulation and implementation.