



CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition (VGFSyN): Draft One
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Draft One

Comment on VGFSyN Draft One
From Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries,
Government of Japan

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PART 3 - THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES ON FOOD SYSTEMS AND NUTRITION

1. The VGFSyN provide guidance on actions at multiple points across food systems, recognizing that food systems are interconnected and that any action to address one part will impact another. These actions can have both benefits and unintended consequences. Founded upon the principles of the right to adequate food, the VGFSyN provide a framework to promote policy coherence and to bring various stakeholders – people and organizations – who are involved in food systems to work holistically and together to deliver sustainable and healthy diets for optimal nutrition outcomes.

2. The VGFSyN provide policy entry points, tools, and mechanisms across the constituent elements of food systems, namely food supply chains²¹, food environments²², and consumer behaviour²³. They provide a range of actions that States, and other actors can consider to improve food systems to achieve better nutrition outcomes, with governments being critical in orchestrating effective enabling environments.

3. This part is structured around the following six main sections:

- on governance of food systems which underpins and cuts across the other five sections;
- on food supply chains which determine the availability of safe and nutritious food;
- on actions to be taken to ensure accessibility of sustainable and healthy diets;
- on the notion that people are central to nutrition knowledge and education;
- on women's empowerment in food systems - as they are often the most vulnerable - but with great potential for reshaping food systems for the future;
- on humanitarian contexts.

3.1 TRANSPARENT, DEMOCRATIC AND ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE OF FOOD SYSTEMS

4. This part of the VGFSyN addresses the governance of food systems for enhancing nutrition. It covers issues of leadership and accountability, from global to local levels, across food systems.

3.1.1 Building on multi-sectoral actions and coordination

- a) States should facilitate an inclusive dialogue ensuring the participation of a range of stakeholders working with or in food systems, including national and international organizations from civil society, indigenous people, the private sector, the UN, donors and national researchers. This dialogue should cover all dimensions of food systems, including production, distribution, marketing and consumption. Marginalized and the most vulnerable social groups should participate in the process of defining policies and strategies at national and local levels to prevent and combat hunger and malnutrition.
- b) Considering the pivotal role of the private sector in the production, distribution and sale of food, States should facilitate an inclusive dialogue with the private sector to build strategies that improve food environments.
- c) States and inter-governmental organizations should encourage increased financial investment to support food systems that deliver sustainable and healthy diets.

3.1.2 Promoting policy coherence by integrating nutrition into national development

- a) States should align policies that affect nutrition across sectors, ministries and agencies, and strengthen legal frameworks and institutional capacities to deal with the multiple causes and

²¹ Food supply chains “consist of the activities and actors that take food from production to consumption and to the disposal of its waste”, including production, storage, distribution, processing, packaging, retailing and marketing. HLPE 2017b

²² Food environments “refer to the physical, economic, political and socio-cultural context in which consumers engage with the food system to make their decisions about acquiring, preparing and consuming food”. HLPE 2017b

²³ Consumer behaviour “reflects all the choices and decisions made by consumers on what food to acquire, store, prepare, cook and eat, and on the allocation of food within the household”. HLPE 2017b

consequences of malnutrition. This can be done by establishing or strengthening multi-sectoral, multistakeholder mechanisms that oversee the implementation of evidence-based policies, strategies and interventions.

- b) States should integrate food system approaches that promote nutrition in national development, health, economic, and disaster risk reduction plans. This should be complemented with increased budgetary allocations to food system activities that relate to improving diets and nutrition, and transparent indicators to track and assess the full cost of addressing malnutrition in all its forms.
- c) States should foster policy coherence across sectors to reduce all forms of malnutrition. These sectors include agriculture, environment, energy, water, sanitation, hygiene, health, education, fiscal policies, trade, investment, and economic and social development.
- d) States, UN agencies, and international organizations should identify opportunities to achieve national and global food and nutrition targets set out by the WHA and the SDGs.

3.1.3 Instituting accountability mechanisms, monitoring and evaluation

- a) States should institute strong and transparent accountability mechanisms that pertain to different food system actors. These mechanisms should promote good governance, public deliberation, independent bodies monitoring compliance and performance, remedial actions to improve accountability, and capacity to manage conflicts of interest and settle disputes that may undermine public health.
- b) States should ensure that multilateral and bilateral trade and investment agreements are consistent with nutrition, food and agriculture national policies and favour the transition towards more sustainable food systems, assessing how the health, environmental, social and economic outcomes of food systems are likely to be affected. This should include an assessment of how competition will be impacted, and whether and how levels of concentrated market power will change.
- c) States should improve the availability and quality of multi-sectoral information systems that capture and harmonize food security and dietary indicators (particularly the dietary intake/consumption of food for the nutritionally vulnerable), food composition, and nutrition-related data for improved policy development and accountability. States should ensure there is robust technical capacity to analyze food system information in a comprehensive manner to support the planning and monitoring of actions.

3.2 SUSTAINABLE NUTRITION-ORIENTED FOOD SUPPLY CHAINS IN THE CONTEXT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

5. Food chains operate at assorted scales and levels, from the shortest supply chains, to long, highly complex and globalized chains. The decisions made by the actors at any stage have implications on the availability, affordability, accessibility, acceptability, and safety of nutritious food for a healthy diet. Climate change and other environmental constraints are also making food supply more challenging.

3.2.1 Ensuring sustainable use and management of natural resources

- a) States, farmers and other food producers should ensure that soil fertility is addressed as central to agriculture production systems, because nutrient-rich soils are critical to the production of food necessary for healthy diets. States should encourage the use of ecosystem services which maintain soil biodiversity and nutrient balance, and promote carbon storage.
- b) States should ensure the management, control and sustainable use of water resources for agriculture and food production through regulation and community participatory approaches. These approaches should foster the reduction of water wastage in irrigation, ensure the systematic use of appropriate water-saving technologies, minimize water pollution stemming from agriculture, and promote the multiple uses of water (including wastewater) without compromising the ability of farmers and food producers to grow sufficient, nutritious food.
- c) States should foster the protection of biodiverse landscapes and food and agriculture production systems including crops, livestock, forestry and plantations, fisheries and sustainable aquaculture. They should encourage the adoption of practices, including agroecological approaches, that ensure that the biodiversity of landscapes, including forests, waters and coastal seas, other agro-ecosystems, and sylvo-pastoral systems, is conserved and sustainably used.
- d) States and private sector food actors should protect the biodiversity of forests and fisheries that are currently over-sourced, over-exploited, and endangered, by implementing the VGGT and other relevant international agreements.
- e) States should promote the diversification of crops and animals including neglected and underutilized traditional crops, fruit, vegetables, legumes, nuts, and seeds, and animal-source food, applying sustainable food production and natural resource management practices.
- f) States should protect the rights of indigenous people and other communities with customary tenure systems that exercise self-governance of land, fisheries and forests, to land, territories and resources they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired. They should be provided with equitable and sustainable rights to those resources, their livelihoods should be maintained, their indigenous knowledge and practices should be valued, their access to traditional food should be protected, and their diets, nutrition and wellbeing should be prioritized.

3.2.2 Promoting nutrition within agriculture and food production

- a) States should promote nutrition-sensitive agriculture and diversified food production through the integration of nutrition objectives into national food and agriculture policies.
- b) States, private sector food actors and development partners should support and incentivize smallholders, particularly within developing countries, to adopt sustainable production practices and to produce diverse crops that will contribute to the availability, affordability and accessibility of nutritious food, while enhancing farmers' income and livelihood.
- c) States, private sector food actors and development partners should support sustainable livestock, small animal and fishery systems (including artisanal fish and other aquatic systems) because they contribute to the protection and development of livelihoods, provide income, and supply key nutrients for health and wellbeing.

- d) States and private sector food actors should ensure farmers and other food producers have access to seeds, modern and sustainable technologies, as well as skill training and capacity development to be able to use those technologies that could improve the production and quality of crops. These include, among others, biofortified crops, through on-farm conventional breeding, and sustainable agriculture technologies including better management of pollination and nutrient cycling, as well as new technologies.
- e) States should integrate urban and peri-urban agriculture and urban land use into national and local agricultural development strategies, food and nutrition programmes, and urban planning, as a viable input into healthy diets for growing urban populations and social cohesion of communities.
- f) States should invest in research and innovation for commercial development of nutritious crops, such as fruit, vegetables, healthy oils, nuts and seeds, legumes, biofortified crops, and diverse animal-sourced food, which are developed through conventional on farm breeding and are sustainable for smallholders.

3.2.3 Improving food storage, processing, transformation and reformulation

- a) States and private sector food actors should foster the development and uptake of adapted and affordable storage facilities, or invest in adequate storage, including cold storage, to allow for smallholders and food actors to have greater flexibility when they can sell their products, and to allow consumers to buy such products at adequate prices. States should also invest in transportation and road infrastructure to ensure the production of smallholder farmers are able to reach markets. These supply chain investments should be complemented with improved and accessible information technology, training and capacity building to increase farmers' opportunities to deliver diverse, perishable, safe and nutritious food to market and for consumers to access those markets.
- b) States and private sector food actors, including farmers and their associations, should facilitate minimizing food and nutrient loss on farms, during post-harvest storage and throughout processing and transportation, particularly of perishable food such as fruit, vegetables, dairy, and animal source food. Facilitation includes training and capacity, management practices and fostering the adoption of appropriate technologies, such as cold chambers storage units, solar walk-ins, refrigerators and dry storage, storage drums and drying facilities.
- c) States should incentivize private sector food actors to work towards more sustainable and safe packaging of products such as nanotechnology, waxing, plant-based wrapping, and biodegradable plastics.
- d) States should establish guidance for the use and scale-up of processing technologies that can improve the nutritional content of food (fortification/biofortification), minimize nutrient post-harvest losses, and promote longer-term storage of food, particularly during periods of drought and poor production. Such technologies could include flash and solar drying, converting food to pastes and spreads, and fortification through conventional on farming breeding of staples and oils. States should set guidelines and monitor the level of processing as highly-processed food have associations with unhealthy diets, overweight and obesity.

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- e) States should endeavor to institute ~~regulatory instruments to promote reformulation, complemented with warning labels and taxes~~ appropriate measures not to promote ~~on less nutritious~~ food products ~~that using excessive salt, sugars and fats, in particular saturated fats and trans-fats~~ and do not adhere to national food- based dietary guidelines.
- f) Private sector food and beverage actors should strive to meet public health goals by ~~reformulating food to ensure less nutritious ingredients — such as sugars, salt/sodium and unhealthy fats such as trans fats — are minimized or eliminated in food and beverage products and nutritious ingredients such as fibre, fortificants, and other health-promoting ingredients are increased.~~ further producing and promoting food products consistent with a healthy diet, making further efforts to reformulate them in order to provide healthy and nutritious options, reducing the excessive use of salt, sugars and fats, in particular saturated fats and trans-fats.

Commented [k1]: There could be many types of different measures for not to promote on food products using excessive salt, sugars and fats, not limited to regulatory instruments.

Commented [k2]: In line with [para 44 of (d) of "Political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases"]

(Adopted by The General Assembly on 27 September 2018:)]

3.2.4 Making markets work for nutrition

- a) To reduce food price volatility of nutritious food, states should promote transparency across food-related market transactions in real-time, with more emphasis on nutritious commodities, including enhanced tracking of food supply and stock data, and future prices.
- b) States should increase public investment in market infrastructure (roads and bridges, physical markets, storage facilities), to reduce transaction costs and enhance food market performance particularly for perishable and nutritious food.
- c) States and private sector actors should support smallholders to meet safety and quality standards of nutritious food that enable them to fulfill demand for the local consumption whilst reaching broader markets and getting higher profits for their products.

3.2.5 Improving nutrition and health of farm and food system workers

- a) States and private sector actors should ensure that those who grow the world's food, have sufficient livelihoods to ensure they too can access healthy diets for their own optimal nutritional status. This means ensuring food producers and workers are food secure, have decent wages, and can access health services.
- b) States should ensure that right to decent work are respected, protected and fulfilled, that farmers and other food producers and workers are protected and safe, and there is no unnecessary burden or undue labour which could negatively impact their health.

3.2.6 Prioritizing climate adaptation and mitigation

- a) States should support and assist farmers and other food producers to lower the environmental impact of food systems. This could be done by fostering appropriate technology and changes in management to improve crop yields and reduce non-organic fertilizer and pesticide usage. States could promote optimization of agricultural outputs per unit of water, energy, and land, and manage the carbon footprint of agriculture activities.
- b) Development partners and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) should provide technical assistance to farmers and other food producers to help them adapt to, and ensure food supply chains are resilient to, climatic shocks and humanitarian crises. Interventions could include access to finance, insurance, better forecasting data, and productive-asset creation initiatives

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(e.g. rehabilitating degraded land and infrastructure building).

- c) States should assist farmers and other food producers to protect crops and livestock and their production systems from the anticipated impacts of climate change in the form of pests,

diseases, weather-related shocks, extreme price volatility through cover crops, no-till farming, crop and weather insurance, and renewable energy technologies.

- d) States should support investment in diverse and nutritious crops and animal production systems, enhanced storage and marketing, reduced food loss and resilience-focused adaptations. Donors and investors should diversify agricultural investment based on ecological suitability, such that a greater diversity of production systems are supported, varied and at scale to meet the needs of both large and small farmers.
- e) States should include dietary quality indices and other food system metrics as part of climate-related target-setting agendas and in related surveillance systems (including early warning systems) to monitor changing conditions and the effectiveness of policy responses.
- f) Researchers should promote the generation and use of rigorous evidence on investment along food supply chains that are resilient to climate change while also delivering positive dietary outcomes. Research should focus on potential interventions and policy entry points to ensure agricultural production, processing and packaging, retail and markets, and consumer demand are adaptable to climate change and disruption.

3.2.7 Empowering youth in food systems

- a) States should engage and empower youth by enhancing their access to productive land, natural resources, inputs, productive tools, extension, advisory service, and financial services, education, training, markets, information, and inclusion in decision-making.
- b) States and private sector food actors should provide appropriate training, education, and mentorship programmes for youth to increase their capacity and access to decent work and entrepreneurship opportunities to stimulate their contribution to reshaping food systems.
- c) States and private sector food actors should promote development and access to innovation and new technologies along food supply chains that enhance nutrition, especially to attract and enable youth to be drivers of improvement in food systems.

3.2.8 Supporting food safety across food supply chains

- a) States should prioritize food safety within their food systems and consider actions concerning handling, preparation, storage, and distribution of food in ways that prevent food-borne illnesses, transmission or contamination of naturally occurring toxins, pesticides, antibiotics and heavy metals. Investment should be made to train food handlers and adopt scientific, risk-based practices that can provide safe food while retaining their nutritional value.
- b) States should develop, establish, enforce and strengthen, as appropriate, food control systems, including reviewing and modernizing national food safety legislation and regulations to ensure that food producers and suppliers throughout the food chain operate responsibly. Considering the centrality of the *Codex Alimentarius Commission* on nutrition and food safety, States should implement, as appropriate, internationally adopted standards at the national level.
- c) States should participate in, and contribute to, international networks to exchange food safety information, including the management of emergencies to improve the safety of food across a range of issues such as pesticide residues, antimicrobial residues, endocrine disrupters, chemical and unsafe food additives, pathogenic bacteria, viruses, and parasites.

- d) To address global antimicrobial resistance (AMR), States should develop and implement national guidelines on the prudent use of antimicrobials in food-producing animals according to internationally recognized standards adopted by competent international organizations. This is to reduce the non-therapeutic use of antimicrobials and to phase out the use of antimicrobials as growth promoters in the absence of risk analysis as described in the *Codex Code of Practice CAC/RCP61-2005*.

3.3 EQUITABLE ACCESS TO SUSTAINABLE AND HEALTHY DIETS

6. Policies and programmes aimed at improving food environments to ensure healthy diets are available, accessible, affordable, culturally acceptable, and safe, should be prioritized by States in the interest of their citizens. For many people, physical access to nutritious food can be problematic as it may not be available in local markets. Nutritious food can also be unaffordable, particularly food that is perishable or comes from a longer distance.

3.3.1 Improving physical access to nutritious food

- a) States should ensure people's physical barriers are minimized to purchase or order diverse types of nutritious food in a given food environment. This can be done by instituting policies that encourage healthy outlets to populate "food deserts"²⁴ with markets that sell nutritious, affordable food, and stop the spread of "food swamps"²⁵ by creating robust zoning laws that restrict food retail outlets which sell an overabundance of **less nutritious food using excessive salt, sugars and fats, in particular saturated fats and trans-fats**. States should encourage zoning laws and tax incentives for farmers' markets and mobile food retailers that sell nutritious food in low-income areas, and reduce the density of fast-food vendors that sell **less nutritious food using excessive salt, sugars and fats, in particular saturated fats and trans-fats**.
- b) States should take into consideration an equity lens when examining access to food environments and ensure members of historically marginalized and vulnerable communities, residents of low-income communities, indigenous people, and those living in rural areas have sufficient access to diversified food markets.
- c) States should improve the availability and access of the food supply through appropriate trade and investment agreements and policies and ensure that such agreements and policies do not have a negative impact on the realization of the right to adequate food in other countries.
- d) States should facilitate access to nutritious food for poor households through vouchers, cash or food supplement programmes. These programmes could substitute basic staple food (such as rice or wheat flour) with more nutritious food in the food basket provided to poor households.

3.3.2 Improving the availability of nutritious food

- a) States should promote the provision of nutritious food through local farmers markets, community cooperatives and other community building efforts that engage citizens around local food culture.

Commented [k3]: In line with [para 44 of (d) of "Political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases"]

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²⁴ “Food deserts” are geographic areas where access to food is restricted or non-existent due to low density of “food entry points” within a practical travelling distance. HLPE 2017b

²⁵ The term “food swamps” describes areas where there is an overabundance of less nutritious food but little access to nutritious food. HLPE 2017b.

- b) States should encourage small and medium enterprises to competitively participate in wet markets, local, domestic and informal markets, and incentivize street vendors to improve the health composition of prepared food through financial incentives and certifications.
- c) States should strengthen public procurement systems by ensuring nutritious food is more accessible and convenient in institutions such as schools, hospitals, foodbanks, and prisons. States should consider promoting home grown school meals, where food served in schools is procured from local and/or family farmers, which can have multiple food system benefits by establishing stable markets for producers while serving more recommended, healthy diets to children.

3.3.3 Making nutritious food more affordable

- a) States should consider pricing policies of perishable fruit and vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds, and animal source food to ensure they are affordable and competitive compared with highly-processed food (which can be inexpensive but high in added sugars, sodium and trans-fats or unhealthy fats). This can be done through input subsidies, access to credit, and tax.
- b) States can be instrumental in reducing the prices of nutritious food by helping farmers reduce their production costs. This can be accomplished through grants, subsidies and non-financial support services to reduce inefficiencies and promote value of nutritious food in the supply chain.
- c) States and local governments, in collaboration with consumers' associations, can institute regulations and incentives to help existing food retailers increase the number and variety of nutritious food products they sell. This can be done by creating local food policy councils to give residents a voice in how best to improve access to healthy diets in their communities.
- d) States should institute tax incentives and other fiscal policies to promote more nutritious food in the food industry. This can be also done by creating ~~disincentives including excise or sales taxes on less nutritious food using excessive salt, sugars and fats, in particular saturated fats and trans-fats, such as sugar sweetened beverages and less nutritious highly processed food,~~ or removing industry tax benefits for the development and marketing of ~~less nutritious~~ food in using excessive salt, sugars and fats, in particular saturated fats and trans-fats, ~~and~~. Tax revenues can also be used for health promotion strategies including retail, manufacturing, or agricultural incentives to reduce the price of healthy and nutritious food.

Commented [k4]: To promote more nutritious food in the food industry, other than tax incentives and other fiscal policies, there could be many types of different measures, not limited to disincentives.

Commented [k5]: In line with [para 44 of (d) of "Political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases"]

(Adopted by The General Assembly on 27 September 2018:)]

3.3.4 Monitoring new technologies and trends for healthy diets

- a) States and researchers should understand the influential roles of the internet, social media and online shopping on the access to healthy diets, addressing the digital divide among different demographics through the use of portable tools to minimize disparities in access to food.
- b) States and private sector food actors should ensure that with the emerging trend of increased consumption of food consumed away from home, restaurants are incentivized to promote nutritious food options, display information about food on menus (i.e. calories, and other nutritional content), and adhere to food safety regulations.
- c) With regard to environmental sustainability, States should understand, scrutinize and govern new food technologies (e.g. lab grown meats, gene editing, biofortified crops, etc.) through CODEX standards as any new food product does in international regulatory frameworks.

3.4 PEOPLE-CENTERED NUTRITION KNOWLEDGE, EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

7. People, both individuals (rights-holders) and members of institutions (duty-bearers), are at the centre of food systems, acting as drivers and experiencing outcomes. Access to knowledge, education and the quality of information available to people on nutritious food, healthy diets and nutrition should become a priority. This prioritization could be done by utilizing available and effective tools, key actors across food systems, and the places in which people access food in their daily lives. It is also important to consider the range and diversity of food cultures, social norms and traditions that influence healthy diets.

3.4.1 Putting people at the centre of nutrition knowledge, education and information

- a) States should pay particular attention to dietary and nutritional needs across the entire lifecycle including pregnant and lactating women, women of reproductive age and adolescent girls, infants, children under five, people living with HIV and tuberculosis, the elderly and people with disabilities. States should ensure food systems are delivering healthy diets for these populations and mitigating against all forms of malnutrition.
- b) States should use the best scientific evidence to promote education and knowledge of healthy diets, physical activity, food waste and safety, adequate breastfeeding and complementary feeding, taking into consideration cultural and social norms and adapting to different audiences and contexts.
- c) States, civil society community leaders, and health professionals should promote food culture amongst communities, including access to culinary skills and stressing the importance of food within cultural heritage, as a vehicle to promote nutrition literacy. This can be done through community participation, associations and educational institutions.
- d) States should protect and promote the knowledge that indigenous people have with regard to methods of producing, preparing and preserving food that imparts nutritional and environmental benefits.
- e) Private sector actors should increase the acceptability of nutritious food by producing and marketing packaged food of this kind in a way that is convenient for people to prepare, cook and eat.

3.4.2 Utilizing policies and tools to increase knowledge, education and information

- a) States should develop national food-based dietary guidelines that define context-specific, sustainable and healthy diets by taking into account social, cultural, economic, ecological and environmental drivers.
- b) States should develop nutrition standards and regulations for the marketing of food and beverages to children and ban advertising of **less nutritious** food **in using excessive salt, sugars and fats, in particular saturated fats and trans-fats** to children, as they are particularly susceptible to the influence of food marketing.
- c) States should institute easy-to-read front-of-pack labelling of evidence informed metrics ~~/warnings~~ such as overall fat quality (e.g. unsaturated to saturated fat ratio), trans-fats, carbohydrate quality (e.g., carbohydrate to fiber ratio), added sugars, and sodium. ~~Food with warning signs should be regulated – i.e. not sold in or near schools and not advertised to children.~~ Committing to further reduce the exposure of children

Commented [k6]: In line with [para 44 of (d) of [Political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases]

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to and impact on them of the marketing of foods and beverages high in fats, in
particular saturated fats and trans-fats, sugars or salt, consistent with national
legislation, where applicable;

Commented [k7]: In line with [para 44 of (e) of 'Political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases'] (Adopted by The General Assembly on 27 September 2018:)

- d) States should regulate the marketing of commercial infant formula and other breast-milk substitutes and implement the full set of WHO recommendations on the marketing of breast-milk substitutes and of food and non-alcoholic beverages to children. The International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes²⁶ needs to be enforced through accountability mechanisms and international legislative enforcement.
- e) Private sector food actors should consider the design of food markets, restaurants and other places where food is sold or served to shape nutritious food choices and decision making. Incentives, sales and discounts should be put into place that encourage the placement and promotion of nutritious food products in retail spaces.
- f) States, chefs, dietitians, private sector food actors and NGOs should implement nutrition education and information interventions based on Food-Based Dietary Guidelines and other policies related to food and diets, through improved school curricula, nutrition education in the health, agriculture and social protection services, and community interventions.
- g) States should consider the inclusion of nutrition information within agriculture extension technical packages as a way to support producers in increasing the production of high nutrient density crops and crop diversification.
- h) NGOs, dietitians, and chefs should consider coupling nutrition education and counselling with maternal and child nutrition programmes (e.g. food supplements, micronutrient supplements, or conditional cash transfers) to double down impacts on dietary and nutritional outcomes.
- i) States, UN and NGOs should promote social and behavior change communication (SBCC) and social support interventions as a way to improve nutrition. SBCC can be used by different actors as a way to influence behaviour change by positively influencing knowledge, attitudes and social norms, coordinating messaging across a variety of communication channels to reach multiple levels of society.
- j) States, chefs and private sector food actors should educate all food system stakeholders to prioritize the reduction of food waste. Actions could include awareness campaigns at national, regional and global levels, labelling schemes, and updating Food-Based Dietary Guidelines to align recommendations with policies and programmes to tackle food waste.
- k) States should draw on the knowledge, experience and insights of individuals who are not usually regarded as members of the nutrition community - e.g. community leaders, chefs, supermarket buyers, influencers on social media, youth leaders, young entrepreneurs, mayors and local communities - in the development of multi-component, community-based media campaigns promoting nutrition education and the benefits of healthy diets.

3.4.3 Promoting “hubs” for nutrition knowledge, education and information

- a) Universities and schools should institute a nutrition curriculum for all medical and nursing students during training.
- b) States should support school and worksites to serve nutritious food to school-aged children and workers and promote culinary skills among school age children, adolescents and in adults, to

²⁶ [International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes](#). WHO, 1981. Geneva.

promote communal meal times, socializing around food, the consumption of healthier diets and the need to reduce food waste.

- c) States should link the provision of healthy school meals with clear nutritional objectives and be adapted to the needs of different age-groups, with special attention to the needs of adolescent girls. Policymakers should review education curricula to incorporate nutrition education principles, while adopting practical teaching tools such as school gardens and culinary lessons, and providing technical support to help schools implement changes.

3.5 GENDER EQUITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT ACROSS FOOD SYSTEMS

8. Gender relationships and norms are among the most significant drivers of healthy diets. In many countries, women make decisions about the household's diet and, as primary caregivers, they have an influence on the family's nutritional status. Therefore, women's and girl's empowerment through education, information and access to resources and services is key to improving nutrition. Improving women's wellbeing, ensuring access to financial, technical and biophysical resources, improving agency, voice and status, and challenging the power relationships that limit choices, are promising policy entry points to empower women and ultimately, improve food security and nutrition.

3.5.1 Recognizing women's nutritional status and deprivation

- a) States, UN agencies and NGOs should prioritize the nutritional wellbeing of adolescent girls and women and provide health and nutritional care and services through various sectors. This can be done by ensuring they are central to national development strategies, and the recipients of social protection policies and benefits, which can break the inter-generational cycle of malnutrition.
- b) Acknowledging the significant time and work burden of women in the preparation of nutritious food at the household level, and their roles in agriculture and food production, States should recognize and value the importance of unpaid care work at household level through protective laws, social protection programmes and other benefits.
- c) States should create an enabling environment to promote breastfeeding, ensuring that decisions to breastfeed do not result in women losing their economic security or any of their rights. This would include removing workplace-related barriers to breastfeeding (breaks, facilities, and services) and labour laws to protect women who chose to breastfeed.

3.5.2 Promoting and acknowledging women as food system entrepreneurs

- a) States should advance women's equal tenure rights, and their equal access to and control over productive land, natural resources, inputs, productive tools, and promote access to education, training, markets, and information in line with the *VGGT*. This can be done by strengthening women's access to natural, physical, financial, human, and social capital, so they can effectively contribute to sustainable food systems that promote nutrition.
- b) States should enhance women's roles in agriculture by giving women decision-making power over what is produced, why, and how. Women should be offered extension and advisory services for crops and animal products that they produce or process, capacity-building to engage

with traders, financial services (credit and savings mechanisms), and innovative entrepreneurial opportunities across food systems.

- c) States should promote labour and time saving technologies for women such as food preservation and processing equipment, cold storage, heat and thermal processing, grinding/blending devices, energy saving stoves, and modern farm equipment for ploughing, cultivating and harvesting nutritious food.
- d) States should facilitate women's access to opportunities to generate income and increase their participation in decisions on the use of household income. This would include activities such as household and business budget training, and tools to help men and women strengthen their intra-household communication and decision-making skills.

3.5.3 Empowering women across food systems

- a) States should enhance women's meaningful participation in partnerships, decision-making, leadership roles, and the equitable sharing of benefits. A priority should be to strengthen rural women's participation and representation at all levels of policymaking for food security and nutrition, to ensure their perspectives are equally taken into account.
- b) States should increase women's human capital by ensuring that women and girls have access to education and literacy, health care services and social services, as a way to increase household nutritional status.
- c) States should enshrine laws that give women and men shared participation in political decision-making and equality, supporting women holding leadership roles in decision making bodies – parliaments, ministries and local authorities at district and community levels – so that they can be part of the process of devising solutions to the malnutrition challenges they face.

3.6 FOOD SYSTEMS AND NUTRITION IN HUMANITARIAN CONTEXTS

9. This part build upon the 11 principles in the FFA. In situations of humanitarian crises, there is a critical need for nutrition interventions that link humanitarian responses with longer-term strategies to strengthen the resilience of food systems and improve food security and nutrition. For populations with optimal nutritional status at the onset of a humanitarian crisis, their status needs to be protected so that it does not worsen. For those who are already dealing with a malnutrition, emergencies can be a tipping point which can exacerbate malnutrition issues.

3.6.1 Improving the nutritional quality of food and nutrition assistance

- a) States, all parties involved in conflicts, natural disasters and food assistance, including humanitarian organizations, should ensure that food security and nutrition assessments are undertaken throughout a crisis. These assessments should adhere to internationally accepted methods, and be impartial, representative and well-coordinated with governments.
- b) States, parties involved in conflict and natural disasters and humanitarian organizations should provide timely, safe, and sufficient assistance in response to humanitarian crises in a flexible manner, conforming with the beliefs, culture, traditions, dietary habits and preferences of

individuals, in coordination with all stakeholders. The assistance should promote survival, uphold dignity and build resilience.

- c) States should ensure the basic nutritional needs of those people affected by a humanitarian crisis, including the most nutritionally vulnerable. The food items provided should be of appropriate quality, acceptable, and can be used efficiently and effectively. Food must conform to the food standards of the host country's government as well as to the Codex Alimentarius standards about quality, packaging, labelling and fitness for purpose.
- d) States and humanitarian assistance organizations should explore partnerships with industry to ensure micronutrient-fortified food is available through social protection mechanisms and acute malnutrition management programmes, with improved coverage during times of crisis. States, UN agencies and NGOs should work to ensure infant and young child feeding practices are promoted and improved upon during humanitarian crises.
- e) UN agencies and humanitarian assistance organizations should ensure that when implementing cash and voucher assistance, the minimum expenditure basket and transfer value is promoting nutritious food that is locally available and sufficient to provide a healthy diet.

3.6.2 Protecting nutritionally vulnerable groups

- a) States and humanitarian organizations should pay particular attention, protection, and facilitate access to nutritious food and nutritional support to pregnant and lactating women, women of reproductive age and adolescent girls, infants, children under five, people living with HIV and tuberculosis, the elderly and people with disabilities.
- b) States and parties involved in conflicts should respect and protect the equal and unhindered access of all members of affected and at-risk populations to food security and nutrition assistance, in both acute and protracted crises, in accordance with internationally recognized humanitarian principles, as anchored in Geneva Convention of 1949. The design and delivery of food assistance should minimize the risk to recipients and contribute to preventing and ending gender-based violence.
- c) States, with the support of the UN system and international assistance and cooperation where appropriate, should ensure access to nutritious food and nutritional support for refugees and asylum seekers in their territory in accordance with their obligations under relevant international legal instruments.

3.6.3 Making food systems resilient

- a) States should develop early warning systems and food and agriculture information systems that are able to detect and monitor threats to livelihoods. These early warning systems should integrate with broader food analysis systems including the monitoring of available and affordable nutritious food at the local level.
- b) States should invest in disaster risk reduction measures that benefit those most at risk or most in need. In particular, productive assets should be protected from severe weather and climate impacts in a way that strengthen the resilience of affected populations and their ability to cope with shocks from conflicts, climate change or natural disasters. Measures include social safety

nets, investment in protecting fragile livelihoods, emergency fiscal and food reserves, the reduction of transaction costs, and the identification of platforms for integrated interventions.

- c) States should encourage local procurement and the use of local organizations in the implementation of humanitarian food assistance and livelihood programmes to support economic recovery and development, to strengthen sustainable local food systems and to foster the ability of smallholders to access productive resources and markets.

PART 4 - IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF THE USE AND APPLICATION OF THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES ON FOOD SYSTEMS AND NUTRITION

10. All CFS stakeholders are encouraged to promote at all levels within their constituencies, and in collaboration with other relevant initiatives and platforms, the dissemination, use and application of the VGFSyN to support the development and implementation of national policies, programmes and investment plans across all sectors. States are invited to promote the use and implementation of the VGFSyN through coordinated and multi-sectoral policies and interventions, ensuring that activities of different ministries converge toward the promotion of sustainable food systems that enable sustainable and healthy diets and improve nutrition.

11. The VGFSyN should be used to foster dialogue between different actors across sectors, ensuring that all relevant stakeholders, including representatives of the most nutritionally-vulnerable groups, are involved and engaged, and promoting policy coherence while avoiding duplication of efforts.

12. The VGFSyN should be used to influence policy discussions within existing regional and national multistakeholder mechanisms, including national councils, as well as the design of food and nutrition strategies. Effective actions at cross-sectoral level should be promoted through coordinating mechanisms above individual ministry level.

13. Development partners, specialized agencies of the UN, and regional organizations are encouraged to support voluntary efforts by States to implement the VGFSyN. Such support could include technical cooperation, financial assistance, the provision of evidence-based policy advice, institutional capacity development, knowledge sharing and exchange of experiences, and assistance in developing national policies.

14. Donors, financing institutions and other funding entities are encouraged to apply the VGFSyN when formulating their policies for loans, grants and programmes to support both right holders and duty bearers' endeavors. The VGFSyN should contribute to the design of nutrition-sensitive investment that aims to increase the production, affordability, and access to diverse and nutritious food, as well as to promote the integration of nutrition and health dimensions into agriculture and food sector investment plans.

15. The VGFSyN should support the implementation of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016-2025 with the objective to increase the visibility, coordination and effectiveness of nutrition actions at all levels, as key aspects toward the realization of the SDGs by 2030. The implementation of the VGFSyN is expected to contribute to the achievement of the six Global Nutrition Targets (2025) endorsed by the WHA in 2012 and its diet related NCD targets.

16. The intention is to support countries in making “SMART” commitments²⁷ and achieving nutrition objectives as well as the creation of informal coalitions of countries as a way to accelerate and align efforts around specific topics linked to one or more action areas of the Nutrition Decade. This can be done through advocating for the establishment of policies and legislation, allowing the exchange of practices and experiences, highlighting successes and lessons learnt, and providing mutual support to accelerate its implementation.

17. Multistakeholder platforms, partnerships and frameworks at local, national, and regional levels, and across multiple sectors, have to be established or strengthened as a key element contributing to reshaping and promoting sustainable food systems for improved nutrition. Particular attention should be paid to those partnerships and platforms that are already promoting multistakeholder efforts for improved nutrition at country level, such as the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement. Actions should be taken to improve partners’ capacity to design, manage and participate in these partnerships, to ensure transparency and accountability and promote good governance as a way to ensure effective results. Moreover, actions and synergies should be implemented through the United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN) which is responsible for promoting policy coherence and advocacy for nutrition throughout the UN system.

18. Efforts should be made to increase the human and institutional capacity of countries to implement the VGFSyN and to identify priorities toward their operationalization at national level. The organization of multistakeholder workshops and training, as well as the development of user-friendly and technical guides, are important to contextualize and adapt the agreed global policy guidance to local contexts.

19. Parliamentarians and their regional and sub-regional alliances have a key role in designing policies, raising awareness and promoting dialogue among relevant stakeholders, and allocating resources for the implementation of laws and programmes dealing with food systems and nutrition.

20. The dissemination and uptake of the VGFSyN should be facilitated through the identification of “champions” that could raise awareness across sectors, and the organization of advocacy campaigns at different levels. CFS provides a forum where all relevant stakeholders can learn from the experiences of others in applying the VGFSyN and assess their continued relevance, effectiveness and impact on food security and nutrition.

²⁷ In the context of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition and ICN2 follow-up process, the next step is to translate the recommended policy options and strategies into country-specific commitments for action. These commitments should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound. https://www.who.int/nutrition/decade-of-action/smart_commitments/en/