



# COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

**Forty-fourth Session  
"Making a difference in food security and Nutrition"**

**Rome, Italy, 9-13 October 2017**

**CFS INTERSESSIONAL NUTRITION ACTIVITIES: SUMMARIES**

## **I. CFS CONTRIBUTION TO THE UN DECADE OF ACTION ON NUTRITION (2016-2025) - A DISCUSSION OF THE CFS OPEN ENDED WORKING GROUP ON NUTRITION**

1. Recognizing that the causes associated with malnutrition are complex and multidimensional and require stepped-up efforts by all stakeholders, including from the United Nations System, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) endorsed at its 43rd Plenary a proposed strategy on “CFS Engagement in Advancing Nutrition”. This strategy spelled out a vision for CFS to step up its work on nutrition, with a proposed early focus on food systems, and outlined a series of activities over coming years to support this commitment, to take place under the framework of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025) and as part of the global efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The document further called for CFS Members and stakeholders to “discuss, in the intersessional period 2016-2017, the work programme of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition”, and to “identify CFS potential contribution in line with its mandate.”

2. The UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025), proclaimed by the UN General Assembly on 1 April 2016, is for everybody. It is an opportunity for all stakeholders to take action, to work together to end malnutrition in all its forms, and to build and maintain momentum for efforts throughout the Decade, in order to reach the assigned goals and targets by 2025. The Work Programme of the Nutrition Decade, developed jointly by FAO and WHO in collaboration with other partners, WFP, IFAD, UNICEF, proposes a framework to guide collective efforts, with guiding principles, suggested action areas, means of implementation, governance and accountability sections.

3. The CFS Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) on nutrition met on 10 February 2017 and discussed both the draft UN Decade of Action on Nutrition Work Programme, and a background document “CFS Engagement in Advancing Nutrition and its Contribution to the UN Decade of Action

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on Nutrition 2016-2015” (document CFS OEWG-Nutrition 2017/02/10/02). The discussion was opened by a joint presentation by FAO and WHO on the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition and its first draft Work Programme. The proposal from WHO and FAO suggested roles for CFS to support the implementation of the Work Programme by: i) convening a dialogue on accountability with its Members and stakeholders; ii) providing a platform for political debate and greater policy convergence; iii) generating commitments and actions; and iv) supporting the establishment of action networks.

4. CFS Members and stakeholders provided feedback on the FAO/WHO draft Work Programme, and asked for some clarifications around some of the proposed roles for CFS which could guide the drafting of the next version. CFS Members and stakeholders reiterated their commitments to support collective efforts to eradicate all forms of malnutrition, which will be guided by the CFS strategy on nutrition endorsed at CFS 43. The first concrete contributions from CFS to the Decade of Action were, based on the CFS strategy, as follows:

- An independent, evidence-based report from the CFS High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (October 2017)
- Inclusive policy guidance on nutrition and food systems to promote global policy convergence (October 2019)
- Lesson sharing and experience on nutrition (October 2017 and October 2018, and biennial)
- Progress reporting on nutrition actions (Biennial from October 2017)

5. The CFS role to promote policy coherence and convergence at global level will be inclusive policy guidance focused on nutrition and food systems which is expected to be the main contribution to the Decade of Action, as well as the organization of biennial lesson and experience sharing sessions. Space will also be provided for partners such as FAO, WHO and others to track progress on nutrition, on ICN2 follow up and any potential policy gaps.

6. The OEWG acknowledged that the section of the Work Programme of the Decade of Action compiling commitments to be updated regularly could provide an opportunity for the Committee to take stock of its own work, overall progress, and to reflect on opportunities to further intensify its efforts. If necessary the CFS Nutrition Strategy could be updated after 2019.

## **II. FIRST INTERSESSIONAL NUTRITION EVENT: INVESTMENTS FOR HEALTHY FOOD SYSTEMS (9 MAY 2017)**

7. This event was part of a series of events to “develop common understanding of issues and lay the basis for informed CFS policy convergence work” on nutrition and food systems, called for by the strategy “CFS engagement in advancing nutrition” approved by CFS 43.

8. The theme was proposed by the CFS Open Ended Working Group on Nutrition (OEWG), based on the UNSCN Discussion Paper on the topic. The event represented one of many CFS activities contributing to the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025)<sup>1</sup> and to the implementation of the Second International Conference on Nutrition’s (ICN2) Framework for Action<sup>2</sup>, where Member States committed to increase investments for effective interventions to improve people’s diets and nutrition, and to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

9. The event highlighted the opportunities and constraints that different food systems offer for interventions for improved nutrition and human health by providing both a theoretical analytical

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<sup>1</sup> UNGA Resolution, A/70/L.42

<sup>2</sup> ICN2 2014/3 Corr.1

framework as well as concrete examples of how different stakeholders addressed the issue of healthier food systems through specific investments in different contexts.

10. The event contributed to reaching a greater understanding of potential areas for priority action to strengthen efforts to make food systems more oriented to nutritional outcomes, also by emphasizing implications for other sectors by discussing linkages, tensions and trade-offs.

11. The lessons that were presented, including challenges and constraints, the key messages that were shared, the comments that were submitted during the day can be synthesized in the following points:

- a) Food systems are complex and diverse. They are continuously and rapidly changing as they are subject to important external influences such as population growth, climate change and urbanization. All need to be taken into account when analyzing food systems at national and local levels and identifying paths for increasing their positive impact on nutrition.
- b) In this dynamic context the (changing) roles and position of women should be taken into account while planning for better nutrition outcomes.
- c) A multi-sectoral approach to improved food systems is important as such systems are a strategic point of contact and constitute a valid “lens” for analyzing the complex interaction of many public policies in addition to agriculture, starting with health but also including urban and rural planning, education, transport and logistics, environment, and economic-growth.
- d) It was emphasized that food systems are not themselves good or bad, healthy or unhealthy. They represent a factor among many to improve nutrition outcomes. They do contribute though to more or less desirable outcomes for nutrition as well as other social goals. However currently food systems, despite the important achievements, including in the fight to end hunger, do not sufficiently deliver these healthy diets as all countries in the world suffer from at least one form of malnutrition
- e) Government policies play a major role in influencing whether agriculture and food systems contribute to healthy diets and improved nutrition. As underscored by the Brazilian case presented, government approaches at national and sub-national levels, are important to address the complexities of food systems and of investing in them for better nutrition outcomes. Additionally, linking school feeding programmes to small agricultural producers can bring positive synergies. Government expenditure in infrastructure can support better agriculture investment and enhanced nutritional outcomes.
- f) It was stressed that the private sector and farmers are a key partner in this endeavor. Strategically formulated government policies can catalyze support from the private sector to make positive contributions, as highlighted by the Cote d’Ivoire case presented, including in the use of technology for healthier food. This case also highlighted the importance of dealing with the changing habits of consumers and how to use fortified food for improved nutrition.
- g) It was also underscored how civil society’s role can be of essence in indicating sustainable practices, including traditional cultural ones based on ancestral values and agro-ecology as highlighted by the Guatemala case described and messages based on the right to healthy foods, that guide consumers to make good choices.
- h) Public investments in food systems should be aligned with other social goals. Too often, agricultural and industrial policies ignore their social and health implications. Government has a responsibility to increase social well-being and should align investment policies toward that end.

- i) A multistakeholder approach bringing together all actors within a particular food system is of crucial importance to identify useful investments and maximize their effectiveness for better nutrition.
- j) Education and capacity building of relevant actors in the food system, as well as communities' engagement, play an important role in understanding local food systems and identifying nutrition gaps and their causes as well as elements in the system that could be targeted for investments for healthier outcomes. As the experience of the City of Turin underscored, it is important to support local small producers as well as shorten the link between producers and consumers, referred to as "co-producers" in this example.
- k) Better diets are possible as every food system has the capacity to produce the healthy food that is needed for good nutrition and human health. Food system investments need to be tailored to specific contexts. Investment decisions should take into account food system variations and learn from other experiences.
- l) Investments have a higher pay-off when enabling conditions are present, and when interventions reinforce one another by creating multiple types of capital (human, financial, physical).
- m) Significant gaps remain and need to be closed in the knowledge available to countries and investors about how to select among the investment choices and which to prioritize for a given food system and nutrition context. A specific role could be played by development banks and other financial institutions that could provide contextualized financial information to better identify promising investments that improve nutrition and health.
- n) There is a need for more evidence on the link between food systems and nutrition outcomes, specifically where several issues are involved at the same time: health, productivity, profitability and sustainability.
- o) The need for an environmental focus of investments in food systems emerged in the event's discussions, as did the concern that food systems need to cater for a growing global population.

12. The audience was reminded that this event is a step of a process that could be built upon in the way to possible policy convergence work. It was recalled that CFS 44 will have on 10 October a "nutrition day" that will represent a further contribution to this process and that a FSN Forum call for examples and good practices on investments for healthy food systems is open now.

13. The OEWG Chair concluded by thanking UNSCN for its partnership in this event, the moderator of the Forum, Ms. Carin Smaller from IISD, the author of the background paper, Dr. Rachel Nugent, the four panelists, Marie Konaté, Lilian Rahal, Antonio Gonzales and Andrea Pezzana and all participants that intervened in the course of the day as well as the CFS Secretariat, which organized the event.

### **III. SECOND INTERSESSIONAL NUTRITION EVENT : IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF POLICIES TO SUPPORT HEALTHY FOOD ENVIRONMENTS AND HEALTHY DIETS (26 MAY 2017)**

14. This event is the second in a series of events to "develop common understanding of issues and lay the basis for informed CFS policy convergence work" on nutrition and food systems, called for by the strategy "CFS engagement in advancing nutrition".

15. It represents a contribution to the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025), to the implementation of the Second International Conference on Nutrition's (ICN2) Framework for Action, and to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The discussion highlighted how impact assessment tools, both ex-ante and ex-post, can provide decision-makers with analysis of the situation and the potential impact of policies on food environments and diets. In this area, decisions should be informed by all the data available, but development is needed at national and international levels to enhance the availability of data and information about food environments and diets among other things. Metrics should match an agreed vision for the food system, which takes into account changing diets and patterns of consumption.

16. In many cases, information can be improved using existing data collection systems. Amongst the lessons presented during the discussion was the importance of monitoring the prices of a wide array of nutritious foods, which would allow to regularly assess their affordability and inform policy, production and program decisions in view of improving access to healthy diets, diets that are diverse and adequate - that meet nutrient needs and are moderate in ultra-processed foods and added sugars, salt and fat. In the case of limited availability of primary data, secondary data can play an important role in shaping and assessing policies. As was shown in the case presented by the representatives of Indonesia and Ghana, Food price monitoring and household expenditure surveys can be good sources of data to estimate costs of healthy, nutritious diets, assess affordability, and propose options for reducing costs of nutritious diets and/or increased purchasing power. Monitoring systems benefit from the development of specific indicators to ensure that food systems provide access to adequate food to meet dietary needs, such as the cost of dietary diversity, of nutrient adequacy, and of recommended diets.

17. The event emphasized that a multi-dimensional approach to policy monitoring, not limited to agriculture and health sectors, is needed to deal effectively with the complexities of decision-making for positive nutrition outcomes. As was manifested in the Mexican case, family and socio-economic contexts, including, for example, access to education or urban conditions of living, need to be understood to tackle the many challenges and constraints towards good nutrition.

18. Favouring the consumption of a healthy diet entails several steps: One needs to ensure that there is knowledge within a population of what foods are key sources of needed nutrients, especially for nutritionally vulnerable groups such as children under two years and pregnant and lactating women. Fortified complementary food can play an important role in addressing the needs of such groups, as Indonesia's experience highlighted as well as traditional food. Another step is to ensure knowledge is available about the diet of a population in order to nudge the population towards healthier diets. This requires information about dietary consumption, which is more difficult to measure than the consumption of "single nutrients" such as salt.

19. The event emphasized the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach bringing together specialized actors, communities, private sector, civil society and government's different sectors at different administrative levels to design, collect and analyze the necessary information to regularly verify the impact of policies on nutrition and ensure accountability, in addition to the possible adjustments of policies.

20. Key themes and issues raised during the discussion included:

- a) Nutrition should be explicitly part of discussions of the impacts of different policies.
- b) Policies should be assessed not only in terms of nutrition impacts but more broadly in terms of human health and environmental impacts as well as effects (intended or unintended) on other sectors. A comprehensive set of diverse indicators may be needed.
- c) National and international metrics need to be upgraded and updated to reflect the national and international nutrition objectives. It was suggested that metrics should match the

CFS vision in “CFS engagement in advancing nutrition”.

- d) Sharing experiences and lessons across countries is useful to encourage the inclusion of nutrition objectives into a broad range of policies.
- e) There is a need to address conflicts of interest when discussing policies in view of good nutrition outcomes. An early dialogue between different sectors and stakeholders can help mitigate this problem.
- f) In certain cases, impact assessment policies can help address the price volatility of nutritious foods.
- g) The design of monitoring systems can be done in a flexible way to allow for adjustments and adaptation to the different situations and contexts at the national and the regional levels.
- h) The Committee on World Food Security offers a platform, in the framework of the Nutrition Decade, to discuss inclusive multisectoral guidance to accompany at global level the transformations of food systems and environment to improve nutrition in countries

21. The OEWG Chair concluded by thanking UNSCN for its partnership in this event, the moderator of the Forum, Ms. Lynnette Neufeld from GAIN; the author of the background paper, Dr. Anna Herforth; the five panelists, John Nortey, Deputy Director of Research and Information, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Ghana; Aldo Verver Y Vargas Duarte, Deputy Director-General of the Federal Commission for the Protection against Sanitary Risk, Mexico; Vivi Yulaswati, Director for Poverty Reduction and Social Welfare, Ministry of Planning, Indonesia; Nick Deschuyffeeler, Food Policy Manager, Food and Drink Federation, Belgium; and Ana Paula Bortoletto, Head of the Healthy Diets Program Institute for Consumer Protection, Brazil; and all that intervened in the course of the day as well as the CFS Secretariat, which organized the event.

#### **IV. ACHIEVING THE 2025 GLOBAL TARGET FOR STUNTING - INVESTING IN FOOD SYSTEMS TO PREVENT STUNTING (22 SEPTEMBER 2017)**

22. This event was the third in a series of events to “develop common understanding of issues and lay the basis for informed CFS policy convergence work” on nutrition and food systems, called for by the strategy “CFS engagement in advancing nutrition“. It represents a contribution to the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025), to the implementation of the Second International Conference on Nutrition’s (ICN2) Framework for Action, and to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

23. Stunting is one of the most severe forms of undernutrition and one of the most significant impediments to human development, globally affecting approximately 155 million children under the age of 5 years. Stunting has long-term effects on individuals and societies, including: diminished cognitive and physical development, reduced productive capacity and poor health, and an increased risk of degenerative diseases.

24. In 2012, the World Health Assembly endorsed a Comprehensive implementation plan on maternal, infant and young child nutrition, which specified six global nutrition targets for 2025. The first target is on stunting. It calls for a 40% reduction in the number of children under-5 who are stunted. If current trends continue, projections indicate that this target will not be met as 127 million children under 5 years will still be stunted in 2025. Therefore, further investment and action are necessary to attain the 2025 World Health Assembly target of reducing that number to 100 million.

25. Stunting has a number of causes, which can be immediate (inadequate dietary intake and disease) or underlying and basic (income poverty, social economic and political context). Some of the underlying causes are directly related to how food systems work and how they deliver, or fail to deliver, healthy diets in a sustainable manner.
26. While immediate causes can differ from one form of malnutrition to the other, for instance stunting and obesity, many underlying and basic causes are similar. These include: low incomes, poverty in human, social, physical capital, lack of access to natural resources, or the greater social, economic and political context. These various forms of malnutrition are now increasingly found to co-exist, sometimes within the same household.
27. The national experiences and the work of the UN Agencies presented during the event showed that national policies should address all forms of malnutrition together and avoid a siloed approach leading to a simultaneous decrease of stunting and increase in obesity.
28. Because of its many causes (from sanitation, to gender inequality, poor education, poverty, unavailability of sufficiently diverse food), addressing stunting and other forms of malnutrition requires an integrated, “food systems approach” and a multisectorial response.
29. The interventions of FAO, IFAD, WFP and WHO all stressed a profound conviction that stunting is preventable and that its prevalence can be reduced. WHO, as a normative agency, underlined the importance of its evidence based recommendations on what constitutes a healthy diet, e.g. on breastfeeding. FAO and IFAD presented their work on reforming food systems through effective policies to address all forms of malnutrition, with a specific focus of IFAD in rural areas. WFP emphasized its work, which guides nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions at country level, including in emergency settings.
30. The importance of a multi-stakeholder approach bringing together specialized actors, communities, private sector, civil society at all levels and various government ministries was stressed. UN organizations showcased very good examples of complementary approaches and action that have strong positive impacts on nutrition. The national cases presented underlined the need for participatory policies that encourage and support the different actors in their efforts toward improved nutrition.
31. Strong political commitment at the highest levels is key to ensuring the multisectorial and multistakeholder approaches that are needed to fight malnutrition. Nutrition-specific interventions focusing on both mothers and children can be effective in preventing child stunting, especially during the 1000 days from conception
32. Nutrition specific interventions are not sufficient to eradicate stunting. They need to be supported and complemented by nutrition-sensitive actions, addressing the underlying causes of malnutrition, encompassing a whole-of- life approach including specific needs of adolescent girls as mothers-to-be.
33. Responses and policies targeting the agricultural sector offer great opportunities for improved nutrition. This is due to the multiple links between agricultural livelihoods and nutrition, including through income generation, production-consumption links, the impact of public policies for economic access to nutritious diets and the key role of women in agriculture.
34. The event strongly underlined the central role of women in the fight against malnutrition. Women’s contribution is crucial as child bearers, primary food producers through breastfeeding, primary child carers, workers, farmers, food processors and distributors.
35. The national cases presented different approaches to nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive actions.. The Thailand case emphasized the importance of community-based mobilization as well as school lunch programs. Senegal case stressed the importance of monitoring to continuously adjust and adapt the actions of the wide array of stakeholders involved in the implementation of their National

Nutrition Policy. The India experience stressed the need to develop national legislation and policies for critical interventions in food security for women. The Ethiopian Productive Safety Net, which offers cash and in-kind transfers to chronically food insecure communities, is the platform identified for important nutrition-sensitive interventions.

36. Malnutrition causes, including causes of child stunting, are closely related to the context and derive from a unique mix of factors. Interventions therefore call for carefully designed local, context-specific interventions. Community-led/ community-based approaches mindful of social and cultural norms, offer excellent examples of effective, sustainable, targeted and participatory action geared towards the long-term.

37. The context-specificity of malnutrition issues, including stunting, justifies looking at food environments as a vital area for intervention within food systems. Food environments are identified as a key food system entry point for policies, investments, and actions to promote positive dietary change and an important area of focus for CFS policy convergence work on nutrition, consistent with the recommendations in the CFS High Level Panel of Experts report on Nutrition and Food Systems.

38. The Chair of the Open Ended Working Group on Nutrition concluded by thanking FAO, IFAD, WFP and WHO for the financial contributions which made this event possible as well as their interventions as panelists. He thanked the moderator, Ms. Stineke Oenema from UNSCN; the keynote speaker, Ms. Suneetha Kadiyala; the four panelists, Vandana Prasad of India, Abdoulaye Ka of Senegal, Ferew Lemma of Ethiopia, Emorn Udomkesmalee of Thailand; and all who intervened in the course of the day as well as the CFS Secretariat, which organized the event.