Workshop 2.6
Success story for the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025) – Policy coherence across food systems: best practices and lessons learned

INFORMATION NOTE

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16:30-18:30
Radisson Victoria Plaza Hotel

Aim:
- Share concrete country-level experiences, lessons learnt and good practices for the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025).
- Identify challenges and key strategies across food systems that can be used to enhance policy coherence and collaboration across sectors and stakeholders in government and society.
- Encourage SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound) national commitments on policy coherence across food systems which address malnutrition in all its forms and promote healthy diets.

Key messages:
- Policy coherence occurs when policy actions across sectors and stakeholders are actively aligned towards meeting agreed objectives.
- The Decade of Action on Nutrition, aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), recognizes the importance of sustainable food systems (from “farm to fork”) and emphasizes the need for a coherent food systems approach to prevent malnutrition in all its forms and diet-related noncommunicable diseases (NCDs).
- Malnutrition in all its forms (stunting, wasting, micronutrient deficiencies, overweight and obesity) affects every region of the world and national progress to reach the World Health Organization (WHO) targets on nutrition and NCDs are uneven and insufficient. Policy coherence is key to national progress on reaching these targets.
- Under the umbrella of the Decade of Action on Nutrition, countries and other stakeholders are invited to increase efforts to end all forms of malnutrition and contribute to the prevention of diet-related noncommunicable diseases by making SMART commitments.

Questions to be addressed:
1. How can the lessons learned from the progress achieved be capitalized on to encourage more SMART commitments that address the double burden of malnutrition?
2. How can silos be broken down to encourage a multi-sectoral approach towards the double burden of malnutrition?
3. How can the undernutrition and overweight and obesity communities work together to encourage governments to formulate SMART policies that address malnutrition in all its forms through double duty actions?
Key words: Nutrition, food systems, policy coherence, malnutrition in all its forms, diet-related noncommunicable diseases, cancer, diabetes, heart disease, stunting, wasting, micronutrient deficiencies, governance, best practice, commitments, Decade of Action on Nutrition

Context: (epidemiological, political, technical)

Today, nearly one in three persons globally suffers from at least one form of malnutrition – undernutrition, micronutrient deficiency, overweight or obesity – and a large part of the world’s population is affected by diet-related noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). The economic consequences represent a 10% loss of gross domestic product (GDP) globally. The total lost economic output for NCDs is equivalent to 75 per cent of global GDP in 2010 (US$63 trillion). 1.9 billion adults are overweight or obese, while 811 million people remain chronically undernourished. The global economic impact of obesity is estimated at US$2 trillion a year.

Malnutrition is caused by a powerful array of factors, and it requires an even more powerful alignment of stakeholders, working across many sectors, to overcome it. To attain SDG 2 (“End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture”)—and other SDGs—we must implement policies that make food, health, education, WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene), and poverty reduction systems more nutrition oriented. Policies are needed that make food, social, health, and living environments conducive to behaviors that will reduce malnutrition in whatever form it takes. Policies need to focus on carrying out a “double duty” to address undernutrition while also combating obesity and diet-related NCDs at the same time.

It is recognized that ending malnutrition is well aligned with other development imperatives, such as slowing climate change, making food systems healthier and more sustainable, and helping businesses become more supportive of sustainable development.

In the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) Rome Declaration, Member States committed to “enhance sustainable food systems by developing coherent public policies from production to consumption and across relevant sectors to provide year-round access to food that meets people’s nutrition needs and promote safe and diversified healthy diets” (Commitment 15c). In 2016, the UN General Assembly, endorsed the ICN2 outcomes and proclaimed 2016 to 2025 the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (Nutrition Decade). In May 2016, the World Health Assembly, through Resolution 69/8 requested the Director General of WHO to work with the Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) “to support Member States, upon request, in developing, strengthening and implementing their policies, programmes and plans to address the multiple challenges of malnutrition [.]”

A whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach is needed to create environments for individuals and communities that are conducive to reducing malnutrition in all its forms. The impact of policies and actions depends on successful, mutually reinforcing, interactions among all the actor groups. Policy coherence can be especially challenging between trade and economic policy on the one hand (which provides, for example, legal frameworks enabling and promoting trade) and health and nutrition policy on the other (which aims to build a healthier food environment and promote a healthy population).
The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) 2017 report on Nutrition and Food Systems, recommends for states “to foster policy coherence in order to improve diets and nutrition through enhanced coordination across sectors including agriculture, environment, energy, water, WASH, health, education, fiscal policies, economic and social development.”. The UN Decade of Action on Nutrition provides the political legitimacy to promote coherence of national, regional and international policies focusing on evidence and results across multiple sectors to combat all forms of malnutrition, and provides global connectivity among all constituencies working on food and nutrition-related programmes and initiatives to create mutual learning and foster synergies for action.

**Progress to date:**

While there has been progress made, nutrition challenges faced by countries continue to evolve and grow, and their solutions require strong and sustained political leadership. Only a limited number of countries are on course for meeting targets related to stunting, wasting, and overweight among children under age 5 and exclusive breastfeeding.

According to the data contained in the WHO Global database on the Implementation of Nutrition Action (GINA) recently updated with information from the 2nd Global Nutrition Policy Review (2016 – 2017), a significantly higher number of countries has national policies and plans which state clear goals and strategies to improve nutrition and promote healthy diets (189). Of them, 182 include goals aligned to the Global Nutrition Targets: 113 on stunting, 91 on anaemia in women, 101 on low birth weight, 141 on child overweight, 129 on exclusive breastfeeding, and 101 on wasting. Moreover, 165 of the 189 countries also integrate goals related to diet-related NCD targets: 92 on sodium/salt intake, 82 on high blood pressure, 132 on diabetes and 152 on overweight and obesity in adults or adolescents.

Much progress was observed on policies to promote healthy diets and preventing and managing acute malnutrition. Nutrition labelling is implemented in 122 countries, while only in 51 in 2009 – 2010. Similarly, countries which are taking action on food reformulation has increased from 29 in 2009 – 2010 to 60 in 2016 – 2017 (40 to reduce sodium/salt); trans-fat bans from 12 to 26, and fiscal policies to promote healthy diets from 15 to 38 (30 on sugar-sweetened beverages).

The Global Nutrition Report (2016) notes that, about half of the 22 large food and beverage companies surveyed have set targets on salt, sugar, and added fats. Virtually none have targets to increase the levels of more health-promoting ingredients (such as whole grains, fruits, and vegetables) in their products, or to ensure accessibility of healthy products.

Governments and civil society e.g. in Brazil, Peru, Viet Nam, Kenya, Ghana, and the Indian state of Maharashtra have pursued determined and sustained efforts to improve nutrition outcomes by making political choices to allocate scarce resources to nutrition, with their efforts paying off.

**Challenges:**

All countries face challenges caused by issues with political will, financial capacity and private sector influence. Other external challenges also influence governments’ ability to take action to implement SMART policies that will ensure the global targets are met. These include a potential slowdown in global economic growth, increasing numbers of people displaced by conflict, and downward pressure on aid budgets. Achieving policy coherence can also be a challenge where a multi-sectoral approach is difficult to maintain; policy incoherence
and inconsistencies can be regional or global and cross borders. Silos need to be broken down to ensure all relevant government agencies are involved in making nutrition-focused policy, and that the burden of malnutrition is forefront in all policy decisions. Hawkes (2017) studying a fruit and vegetable project in Argentina, refers to a big coherence gap being between policies on paper and delivery of those policies.

**Innovative solutions:**

The Nutrition Decade Work Programme specifies that action networks can be established. These action networks are informal coalitions of countries aimed at accelerating and aligning efforts around specific topics linked to one or more action areas of the Nutrition Decade, 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 implementation. Action networks will help countries implement their SMART commitments.

For example, the WHO Regional Office for Europe has set up five Action Networks. Their aim is to coordinate proposed actions, share country experiences, establish policy dialogue and strengthen synergies. Each Action Network is led by a specific Member State (except COSI).

The Action Networks are as follows:

- **Childhood obesity surveillance Initiative** Refers to the WHO European Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative (COSI), which is coordinated by WHO/EURO.
- **Reducing salt intake in the population, 2013** (ESAN- WHO European Salt Action Network. Led by Switzerland. WHO is a facilitator.
- **Hospital nutrition, 2010.** Led by Israel. WHO is a facilitator.
- **Obesity and inequities - Guidance for addressing inequities in overweight and obesity, 2014** Led by Denmark. WHO is a facilitator.

Recently Norway announced the establishment of a Global Action Network on Sustainable Food from the Ocean for Food Security and Nutrition under the Nutrition Decade.

Countries are aiming to implement SMART policies to address the burden of malnutrition. Brazil and Ecuador are two countries that have announced the adoption of SMART commitments under the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition. For example, Brazil has committed to stop the growth in the adult obesity rate (which currently stands at 20.8%) through intersectoral policies.

**Country cases / Success-stories:** *(The policy coherence and multisectoral engagement aspects of the initiative should be highlighted, as applicable)*

Chile's food system is undergoing structural changes, with traditional foods being replaced by highly processed food products, contributing to significant increases in overweight, obesity and non-communicable diseases.

The Government of Chile, and particularly the Ministry of Health, has strongly invested in supply- and demand-side interventions for a healthy transformation of the food system:

- Laws and regulations for the labelling of food and beverages (i.e. their calorie, fat, sugar and sodium content) have been implemented.
- An 18 percent *ad valorem* tax to sugary drinks is being applied.
- The government and bakers have agreed on a voluntary target to reduce the salt content of bread.
Two programmes, “Health Strategies, Municipalities, Communes and Communities” and “Healthy Life”, support healthy lifestyles and environments while considering context-specific factors.

Key actors and stakeholders involved include Parliament, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Agriculture, the National Consumer Service, the National Television Council, Chile University, and the National Institute of Food Technology (INTA).

For more examples of policies, actions and case studies:

- the WHO Global Database on the Implementation of Nutrition Action
  http://www.who.int/nutrition/gina/en/;
- the NOURISHING database of the World Cancer Research Fund International
  http://www.wcrf.org/int/policy/nourishing-framework

**Relevant resources for further information:**

United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025)
http://www.who.int/nutrition/decade-of-action/en/

http://www.fao.org/3/a-mm215e.pdf

World Cancer Research Fund International's NOURISHING Framework and Policy Database to promote healthy diets and reduce overweight and obesity
www.wcrf.org/NOURISHING

World Cancer Research Fund International & NCD Alliance: *Ambitious, SMART commitments to address NCDs, overweight & obesity: Making the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition count for all forms of malnutrition* (2017)
www.wcrf.org/SMART

WHO - Double Duty Actions for nutrition: policy brief (2017)
http://www.who.int/nutrition/publications双duty-actions-nutrition-policybrief/en/

WHO - The double burden of malnutrition: policy brief (2017)
http://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/doubleburdenmalnutrition-policybrief/en/


Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition: *Food Systems and diets: Facing the challenge of the 21st century* (2016)

WHO NCDs Progress Monitor (2017)
http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/258940/1/9789241513029-eng.pdf?ua=1

References/Bibliography:
The Committee on World Food Security (2017)- High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition: *Nutrition and Food Systems*

The Committee on World Food Security (2017) CFS 2017/44/Inf 18 *Good Practices and Lesson Sharing for Improved Nutrition: Investments for Healthy Food Systems*
http://www.fao.org/3/a-mu275e.pdf

http://www.globalnutritionreport.org/the-report/


UN (2016) United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016-2025 Resolutions and decisions adopted by the General Assembly during its seventieth session A/70/L.42 and Add. 1 70/259

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