

Committee on World Food Security (CFS): Development of Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition

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Example of nutrition in Ecuador

In 2017, 821 million people globally were estimated to be undernourished. In addition, malnutrition in all its forms – undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, overweight, and obesity – is one of the global challenges that countries face today. Malnutrition in at least one of its forms affects every country in the world and most countries are affected by multiple forms.

Malnutrition in all its forms is **associated with various forms of ill-health** and higher levels of mortality. Undernutrition is a major cause of death among children under five while newborns with a low birth weight are more frequently affected by infectious diseases during early life and are more exposed to non-communicable diseases. Stunting and wasting continue to represent a significant challenge. Nearly 151 million and over 50 million children under five years of age stunted and wasted, respectively. While wasting, also known as acute malnutrition, represents a greater risk of mortality and morbidity, stunting, or chronic malnutrition is associated with delays in both physical growth and cognitive development. Micronutrient deficiencies are a key challenge that affect a large proportion of the population with serious consequences on human health, well-being and development.

Meanwhile, overweight, obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases are increasing worldwide in all population groups. Almost two-thirds of the world's obese people now live in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). The prevalence of overweight and obesity is rising in all regions and population groups in the world (amounting 672 million people in 2016), contributing to the global burden of non-communicable diseases.

The **most vulnerable** to malnutrition in all its forms typically include those with high nutrient requirements and less control over their choice of diet. This implies particular attention to **young and school aged children, adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women, the elderly and disabled people**. In many contexts, indigenous peoples and local communities, smallholders and rural and urban poor which struggle in an adverse economic environment are more often affected by malnutrition, whatever type of food systems they live in.

Food systems and diets are major contributors to the nutritional status of populations. They have an important impact on human and planetary health by shaping and enabling producers' decision and consumers' choices. At the same time, *consumers' decisions* on what to consume can also have an impact on food systems and improve their ability to deliver healthy diets. Relevant changes are needed within and across food systems, with the aim to generate positive outcomes along the three dimensions of sustainability. **New policies are required to address policy fragmentation** and to design interventions that have to be coordinated across sectors.

The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) is leading the policy process that will result in Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition to be presented for endorsement at the CFS Plenary Session in October 2020. The preparation of these Voluntary Guidelines is informed by the findings and scientific evidence provided in the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition's (HLPE) [Report on Nutrition and Food Systems](#).

The Voluntary Guidelines are intended to be a reference document that provides guidance to governments, as well as to specialized institutions and other stakeholders, on appropriate policies, investments and institutional arrangements needed to address the key causes of malnutrition in all its forms. They are expected to facilitate the efforts undertaken by countries in operationalizing the Framework for Action of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) under the umbrella of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025).

The **objective** of the Voluntary Guidelines is to **contribute to reshaping food systems** to make them sustainable and to ensure that they contribute to healthy diets, which are available, affordable, acceptable, safe and of adequate quantity and quality while conforming with beliefs, cultures and traditions, dietary habits and preferences of individuals in accordance with national and international laws and obligations. Moreover, the Voluntary Guidelines will provide guidance to relevant actors involved in humanitarian contexts in order to **bridge the gap between humanitarian and development work** and integrate nutrition and longer-term strategies towards sustainable development into any emergency and humanitarian response with a view to strengthening the resilience and adaptive capacity of food systems in response to climate change and humanitarian crises.

[A Zero Draft of the Voluntary Guidelines](#) is now available. It will be discussed in the regional consultations that will be held between July and October 2019¹. These meetings will be an opportunity for national and regional stakeholders from governments, specialized institutions, civil society and the private sector to formulate their expectations and provide their suggestions to be considered in a further version of the document. The **consultation outcomes will contribute to the preparation of the First Draft of the Voluntary Guidelines**, which will be negotiated in spring 2020. The final version of the Voluntary Guidelines will be then presented for consideration and endorsement by the CFS Plenary at its 47th Session in October 2020.

The regional consultation meetings (except the one in the USA) are organized by the CFS secretariat and the respective FAO regional offices.

¹ In Addis Ababa (16-17 July), Bangkok (25-26 July), Budapest (17-18 September), Cairo (25-26 September), Washington (24-25 October) and Panama (28-29 October).



Nutrition – African Fast Food chains