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Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) Follow-up: Nutrition-related Implications for Agriculture and Livestock Development

Executive Summary

In November 2014, by adopting the Rome Declaration and the Framework for Action at the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) world leaders renewed their commitments to establish and implement policies at eradicating malnutrition in all its forms and transforming the food systems to make nutritious diets available to all.

Agriculture contributes to meeting the nutritional requirements of populations by producing sufficient quantities of foods covering all essential nutrients. Agriculture also contributes to the generation of incomes and livelihoods and if coupled with consumer empowerment will contribute to the consumption of healthy diets.

Nutrition-sensitive agriculture seeks to ensure the production of a diversified range of affordable, nutritious, culturally appropriate and safe foods in adequate quantity and quality to meet the dietary requirements of populations in a sustainable manner.

Making agriculture nutrition-sensitive necessitates an approach that warrants attention to all stages of the food system: from inputs through production, post-harvest handling, processing, retailing and consumption.

This paper highlights and offers suggestions on how agriculture – with a special focus on crops and livestock – can be made nutrition-sensitive to address the recommendations of the Framework for Action as a follow-up to ICN2.

Suggested action by the Committee

The Committee may wish to:

- 1) Endorse the areas of work identified for follow up to ICN2 in the agriculture and livestock sector;

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- 2) Encourage countries to mainstream nutrition into agricultural policies and programmes; and
- 3) Encourage FAO to strengthen the capacity of governmental institutions and of local communities to integrate nutrition into agriculture management and training programmes.

Queries on the substantive content of the document may be addressed to:

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I. Background to the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2)

1. The Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), co-hosted by FAO and the World Health Organization (WHO), was successfully held from 19 to 21 November 2014 at FAO Headquarters in Rome. A high-level political event, ICN2 was the first global intergovernmental forum devoted to addressing the world's nutrition problems in the 21st century.

2. ICN2 was convened to: (i) review progress made since the 1992 International Conference on Nutrition, respond to new challenges and opportunities, and identify policy options for improving nutrition; (ii) bring food, agriculture, health and other sectors together and align their sectoral policies to improve nutrition in a sustainable manner; (iii) propose adaptable policy options and institutional frameworks that can adequately address major nutrition challenges in the foreseeable future; (iv) encourage greater political and policy coherence, alignment, coordination and cooperation among food, agriculture, health and other sectors; (v) mobilize the political will and resources to improve nutrition; and (vi) identify priorities for international cooperation on nutrition in the near and medium terms.

3. A total of 2,200 participants, including 164 Members of FAO and WHO, intergovernmental organizations, as well as civil society and private sector organizations attended the Conference. High level participants included 85 Ministers and special guests.

4. The Conference adopted the Rome Declaration on Nutrition¹ and its companion Framework for Action². World leaders thereby renewed their commitment to establish and implement policies aimed at eradicating malnutrition and transforming food systems to make nutritious diets available to all.

5. On 1st April 2016, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 70/259 proclaiming the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025). The Resolution mandates FAO and WHO to co-lead the implementation of the Decade in collaboration with relevant institutions, mechanisms, platforms, partners and stakeholders. The Resolution also calls for active support to the Decade by governments, international and regional organizations, civil society, the private sector and academia, including through voluntary contributions.

II. Relevance of ICN2 outcome documents to the Committee on Agriculture

6. The current global nutrition situation is characterized by high prevalence of undernourishment (795 million affected, FAO 2015), widespread micronutrient deficiencies and rising prevalence of overweight and obesity affecting 1.9 billion people. About two billion people suffer from one or more forms of micronutrient deficiencies.

7. As described in further detail in Section III of this paper, agriculture can contribute to meet the nutritional requirements of populations by producing sufficient quantities of foods covering all essential nutrients. Additionally, agriculture generates incomes and livelihoods, and if coupled with consumer empowerment will contribute to food security and the consumption of healthy diets. By adopting the Rome Declaration on Nutrition and the Framework for Action, world leaders renewed their commitment to establish and implement policies aimed at eradicating malnutrition and transforming food systems to make nutritious diets available to all.

8. In particular, the Framework for Action provides a set of voluntary policy options and strategies, in the form of 60 recommended actions, to guide the implementation of the wide-ranging

¹ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-ml542e.pdf>

² <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mm215e.pdf>

commitments enshrined in the Rome Declaration on Nutrition. The recommendations can be broadly grouped into three clusters as follows:

- a) Creating an enabling environment for effective action (in particular recommendations 1, 3).
- b) Increasing actions for sustainable food systems promoting healthy diets (in particular recommendations 8, 9).
- c) Enhancing nutrition education and information to build capacities (in particular recommendation 19).

III. Nutrition-sensitive agriculture and food systems

9. Across the globe, population growth, rising incomes and urbanization are driving increasing demand for food and agricultural products. Dietary change is taking place with increasing incomes, particularly in urban areas. Agricultural production systems must respond to these growing and changing food demands with a nutrition-sensitive focus geared toward reducing malnutrition and poverty while addressing the threats of land degradation, water scarcity, climate change and other stressors.

10. Nutrition-sensitive agriculture is an approach that seeks to ensure the production of a variety of affordable, nutritious, culturally appropriate and safe foods in adequate quantity and quality to meet the dietary requirements of populations in a sustainable manner. The recognition that addressing nutrition requires taking action at all stages of the food chain - from production, processing, retail to consumption – has led to a broader focus which encompasses the entire food system.

11. Making agriculture and food systems nutrition-sensitive necessitates taking action to address input quality, production, post-harvest handling, processing, retailing and consumption, in order to deliver safe and nutritious foods all year round to the consumer.

12. Nutrition-sensitive agriculture and food systems contribute to improving health outcomes, through for example, production of diverse, safe and nutrient-rich food, income generation that can facilitate access to health services, through reducing contamination of water sources, and through the application of labour-saving technologies.

13. Nutrition-sensitive agriculture and food systems seek to maximize the use of food (crops, livestock, forestry and fishery outputs) produced by reducing pre- and post-harvest losses and food waste through the application of good practices and by applying innovative approaches and technologies to reduce food losses and waste.

14. An enabling environment that is supportive and conducive to the development of nutrition-sensitive agriculture and food systems and food and nutrition policies that guide the development and uptake of healthy diet principles are critical to ensuring that agriculture and food systems deliver nutritional benefits to consumers. Consumers must, in the process, be educated and made aware of the benefits of consuming healthy diets, so that they can make informed choices on dietary selection.

Elements of an enabling policy environment for nutrition-sensitive agriculture and food systems

An enabling environment that is conducive and supportive is required if agricultural investments are to effectively contribute to improving nutrition. A number of mechanisms and approaches are applicable toward enhancing the impacts of agricultural policies on nutrition.

The provision of incentives can contribute to enhancing the availability, access and consumption of a diverse range of nutritious and safe foods, through environmentally sustainable production, trade

and distribution. Data collection – on food prices as well as on dietary consumption - can facilitate the monitoring of dietary consumption and access to safe, diverse and nutritious foods.

Safety nets that allow vulnerable groups, and particularly women to access food during shocks or during seasonal periods when income is low are yet other mechanisms whereby impacts can be enhanced. Facilitating the organization of these groups, their integration into nutrition-sensitive value chains and their access to land tenure rights, productive resources and markets would also enhance their empowerment leading to improved nutrition.

The development of human resource and institutional capacities as well as facilitating access to technologies and public goods (data, infrastructure, food safety standards, etc.) are fundamental in improving nutrition across the food system. Support to the development of multi-sectoral strategies and the development of public - private partnerships, to improve nutrition within national, regional and local government structures is also critical.

Strengthening nutritional impacts through agricultural programmes

15. In 2013, FAO elaborated recommendations on strengthening nutritional impacts through agricultural programmes. These recommendations were developed following an extensive review of available guidance on agriculture programming for nutrition, and consultation with a diverse range of partners originating from civil society, representatives of governments, donors and UN agencies.

Targeting the vulnerable and improving equity

16. Proper targeting to ensure that the entire population, and particularly vulnerable groups – smallholders, women, youth, the landless, urban dwellers and the unemployed - derive equitable benefit through participation, access to resources and decent employment is of critical importance.

17. The diversification of production systems, toward safe, nutrient dense crops - such as horticultural crops and pulses, underutilized and bio-fortified crops; livestock and small-scale fishery and aquaculture production - must be facilitated in order to enhance the resilience of vulnerable producers to climate and price shocks while allowing them to diversify their food consumption and reduce seasonal food and income fluctuations.

Responsible Investments in Agriculture and Food Systems (RAI) for overcoming malnutrition

18. The principles for responsible investments in agriculture and food systems (RAI), among a number of recommendations, promote the nutritional value of food and agricultural products. Principle 1, in particular, states that responsible investment in agriculture and food systems contributes to food security and nutrition, especially for the most vulnerable, and “supports states’ obligations regarding the progressive realization of the right to adequate food.” That entails increasing sustainable production and productivity of safe, nutritious and culturally acceptable food, reducing food loss and waste, improving income and reducing poverty, enhancing market efficiencies and fairness - in particular taking into account the interests of smallholders.

IV. ICN2 follow-up action in the areas of agriculture and livestock

Creating an enabling environment for effective action

19. To enhance and monitor the nutritional impact of food and agriculture policies and programmes, FAO is increasing its technical assistance to countries and is strengthening capacity development efforts on mainstreaming nutrition in sectoral policies and programmes related to nutrition and food systems.

20. FAO is actively engaged in and will continue to support governance and coordination mechanisms for nutrition at the global, regional and country levels by promoting the active participation of food and agriculture related institutions in the planning and implementation of multi-sectoral nutrition strategies.

21. In partnership with WHO, FAO will continue to assist countries to participate in Codex and in the implementation of Codex standards. Continued support will be provided to the participation of countries in, and their contribution to the International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN).

22. FAO will continue to collaborate and partner with the private sector on food loss and waste reduction through the Global Save Food Initiative.

Sustainable food systems promoting healthy diets

23. The diversification of agricultural production enhances soil fertility and thus agricultural productivity while increasing the range of foods available through self-provisioning, local exchanges and on the market which in turn will contribute to healthy diets. Within the framework of the International Year of Soils and the Global Soil Partnership, FAO, in 2015, promoted awareness on the importance of soils for addressing nutrition in the context of healthier food as well as hidden hunger. Work will continue on the enhancement of soil fertility (macro and micronutrients) as a vehicle for improving the nutrient content of crops.

24. The safe use of non-conventional water (NCW), but particularly those supplies derived from treated wastewater, is now an imperative, rather than an option. Work on increasing the availability of water that is safe and of good quality from NCW for use in agriculture and food systems will continue.

25. Support to enhancing the role and capabilities of family farmers and addressing nutrition and food systems in countries in protracted crisis will continue.

26. Diversification of cropping systems is a major theme of FAO's work (for example, FAO's Save and Grow approach). A diversified system is not only resilient to climate change and other external shocks, but is also more sustainable and can provide producers and communities with nutritious food that is safe. The FAO/WHO Initiative on the promotion of fruits and vegetables for health (PROFAV) focuses on boosting production and consumption of fruits and vegetables. Further, it focuses on promoting underutilized/indigenous crops that are adapted to local conditions and which are often of comparably higher nutritional value.

27. Work on post-harvest systems management, value addition, processing, packaging shelf-life extension and the development of food systems that make available affordable, safe food of good quality to consumers will continue. Within the context of this work, continued emphasis will be placed on the reduction of food loss- and particularly post-harvest loss and food waste as well as the application of innovative technologies and approaches to recover food for consumption as part of healthy diets.

28. Support to countries in reviewing, revising and adopting policy instruments, legislation and programmes geared toward making agriculture and food systems more nutrition-sensitive and sustainable will be scaled up. Measures designed to make sectoral and cross-sectoral policy frameworks more nutrition-sensitive will be promoted with member countries.

29. A technical symposium on nutrition and food systems will be organized in December 2016, to create awareness at the policy level, support the exchange of experiences and knowledge across countries and foster partnership across sectors and stakeholders.

Mainstreaming nutrition into agriculture

30. FAO will continue to support member countries in the implementation of the principles for RAI and the *Key Recommendations for Improving Nutrition through Agriculture and Food Systems*³.

31. Work will also continue with partners such as IFAD and the World Bank to mainstream nutrition in agricultural investment programmes.

32. Since 2011, FAO has supported the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), through the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) to mainstream nutrition into national agriculture investment plans. Technical and policy support for better nutrition-sensitive investment planning for CAADP will be scaled up. Lessons learned in the process are being adapted to inform planning in other regions e.g. Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.

33. Biodiversity plays a central role in nutrition-sensitive food systems. FAO has developed Voluntary Guidelines for Mainstreaming Biodiversity into Policies, Programmes and National and Regional Plans of Action on Nutrition⁴. The Guidelines which have been endorsed by the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) in 2015, aim to support countries in developing nutrition-sensitive agriculture practices that integrate consideration for biodiversity.

Nutrition education and information

34. Work geared toward improving nutrition and dietary practices in schools will be strengthened and broadened to include: support in designing and implementing comprehensive school nutrition strategies; defining nutrition standards for sustainable school meal programmes; strengthening linkages to local agricultural production systems and promoting nutrition education (including through school gardens).

Social protection

35. FAO will continue to provide technical support to operationalize the linkages between social protection, nutrition and agricultural interventions across food systems. This will include technical support to engage with national governments in the policy dialogue process on these issues.

36. Support to governments will continue on nutrition-sensitive policies and programmes, particularly in relation to agricultural production systems, food supply chains linked to schools, public food procurement and food systems.

Linking social protection, nutrition and agriculture

The Purchase from Africans for Africa (PAA Africa) is an innovative partnership among FAO, WFP and the Government of Brazil. The Programme involves five African countries (Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal). The programme benefits family farmers and schools, and provides important lessons and technical assistance to governments in support of policies and programmes on local food procurement from small-scale family farmers for school meals. Modelled after Brazil's achievements in fighting hunger and poverty, the *Purchase from Africans for Africa programme* helps African governments to adapt, pilot and scale-up a comprehensive school meals programme with locally sourced food, promoting local agricultural production while also improving livelihoods and nutrition.

³ *Key Recommendations for Improving Nutrition through Agriculture and Food Systems*. FAO, 2015. [Designing nutrition-sensitive agriculture investments](http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/6cd87835-ab0c-46d7-97ba-394d620e9f38/) available from <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/6cd87835-ab0c-46d7-97ba-394d620e9f38/>

⁴ Voluntary Guidelines for Mainstreaming Biodiversity into Policies, Programmes and National and Regional Plans of Action on Nutrition [<http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/68b200ba-928a-4db9-a6ac-6b8fdc3c464b/>].

Creating strong and resilient health systems to address all forms of malnutrition

37. FAO's on-going work to address the role of animal source foods in tackling nutrition will continue. A key component of this work involves investigation of the contribution of livestock products to human nutrition.

38. Following adoption of Resolution 4/2015 by the 39th FAO Conference, an action plan on anti-microbial resistance (AMR) was developed. FAO will support implementation of this action plan in coherence with the implementation of the Global Action Plan on AMR (WHO, June 2015).

39. Within the One Health approach, FAO in collaboration with WHO and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), continue to raise awareness on AMR among relevant stakeholders, while supporting countries and regions to implement multi-sectorial measures to prevent or minimize AMR (e.g., regulatory frameworks, surveillance and diagnostic tools, information databases, alternatives to the use of antimicrobials as growth promoters, and the promotion of good production practices, including biosecurity).

V. Guidance sought

40. Considering the importance of agriculture for nutrition, the Committee may wish to encourage mainstreaming nutrition into national agricultural policies and programmes ensuring that agriculture becomes more nutrition-sensitive. In particular, the Committee may wish to:

- 1) Endorse the areas of work identified for follow up to ICN2 in the agriculture and livestock sector;
- 2) Encourage countries to mainstream nutrition into agricultural policies and programmes; and
- 3) Encourage FAO to strengthen the capacity of governments to integrate nutrition into agriculture training programmes.