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United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition and Follow-up to the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2)

Executive Summary

As recommended in 2014 by the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), the United Nations (UN) General Assembly proclaimed in 2016 the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016-2025, which provides a time-bound cohesive framework to implement the ICN2 commitments. FAO and WHO were mandated to co-lead the implementation of the Decade through a dedicated Work Programme. This was drawn up collaboratively in 2017, and comprises six cross-cutting and connected action areas that are based on the recommendations of the ICN2 Framework for Action.

This document provides an update on progress made in implementing the Decade, in particular on the main means of implementation such as country commitments for action on nutrition and country-led Action Networks. Moreover, the document addresses the preparatory process of the upcoming mid-term review of the Decade.

Suggested action by the Regional Conference

The Conference may wish to provide guidance on further actions in the way forward from the perspective of the Region, including in respect of the mid-term review of the Decade.

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Introduction

1. On 1 April 2016, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted resolution 70/259¹ through which it proclaimed 2016-2025 the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (“Decade”). The proclamation of the Decade was recommended at the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), which was co-hosted in November 2014 by FAO and the World Health Organization (WHO) and which adopted the Rome Declaration on Nutrition² and its companion Framework for Action³. The Rome Declaration on Nutrition sets out a common vision for global action to eradicate hunger and end all forms of malnutrition, including undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, overweight and obesity, and puts forward ten broad policy commitments. The Framework for Action sets forth 60 recommendations to guide the effective implementation of the commitments enshrined in the Rome Declaration on Nutrition.

2. The Decade provides all stakeholders with a unique time-bound opportunity to strengthen joint efforts to implement the ICN2 commitments and recommendations, alongside the nutrition-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including in particular SDG2 to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture, and SDG3 to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

3. The aim of the Decade is to accelerate implementation of the ICN2 commitments, achieve the global nutrition and diet-related non-communicable disease (NCD) targets by 2025, and contribute to the realization of the SDGs by 2030.

4. In resolution 70/259, the UN General Assembly mandated FAO and WHO to: (i) co-lead the implementation of the Decade, in collaboration with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP); (ii) cooperatively develop a work programme for the Decade, using coordination mechanisms such as the UN System Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN) and the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), in consultation with other international and regional organizations and platforms; and (iii) produce biennial reports regarding implementation of the Decade.

5. The Decade’s Work Programme was designed in 2017 through an open, inclusive and collaborative process. It embraces six cross-cutting and connected action areas, based on the 60 recommendations of the ICN2 Framework for Action⁴, namely:

- a) Sustainable, resilient food systems for healthy diets.
- b) Aligned health systems providing universal coverage of essential nutrition actions.
- c) Social protection and nutrition education.
- d) Trade and investment for improved nutrition.
- e) Safe and supportive environments for nutrition at all ages.
- f) Strengthened governance and accountability for nutrition.

6. The means of implementation of the Decade through its Work Programme include:

- a) The submission by Member countries, to FAO and WHO, of their ICN2 Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound (SMART) commitments for action, in the context of national nutrition and nutrition-related policies, set out in dialogue with a wide range of relevant stakeholders.
- b) The convening of action networks, for example informal coalitions of countries that focus on a specific nutrition-related action area and aim to strengthen collaboration on nutrition action.
- c) The convening of fora for planning, knowledge sharing, recognizing successes, voicing challenges and promoting collaboration among relevant stakeholders.

1 <https://undocs.org/A/RES/70/259>.

2 www.fao.org/3/a-m1542e.pdf.

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

4 www.un.org/nutrition/sites/www.un.org.nutrition/files/general/pdf/work_programme_nutrition_decade.pdf.

- d) The mobilization of financial resources to support implementation of national policies and programmes.

7. The Decade's Work Programme was outlined in various progress reports on the initial implementation of the Decade, submitted to the World Health Assembly in May 2017⁵, to the FAO Conference in July 2017⁶, and to the CFS in October 2017⁷. It was further illustrated in subsequent reports to the UN General Assembly in July 2018⁸, to the FAO Committee on Fisheries in July 2018⁹, to the FAO Committee on Agriculture in October 2018¹⁰, to the WHO Executive Board in January 2019¹¹, to the World Health Assembly in May 2019¹², to the FAO Conference in June 2019¹³ and to CFS in October 2019¹⁴.

8. In December 2016, FAO and WHO co-hosted in Rome in 2016 an International Symposium on Sustainable Food Systems for Healthy Diets and Improved Nutrition, with a focus on both supply-side and demand-side policies and measures for increasing access to healthy diets as well as on measures to strengthen accountability, resilience and equity within the food system.¹⁵ As a follow-up to this International Symposium, FAO, with partner organizations, convened in 2017 five Regional Symposia under the umbrella of the Decade.¹⁶ These Symposia took stock of the regional dimensions and challenges of sustainable food systems for healthy diets and improved nutrition; shared key features of food systems in the respective regions, and how these can influence dietary patterns; identified regional policy processes and experiences for tackling nutrition through a food systems approach; and triggered the development of policy actions in line with the ICN2 Framework for Action and the Decade's Work Programme.

9. A dedicated website on the Decade is available in all six UN languages.¹⁷ To encourage consideration of regional perspectives for the upcoming mid-term review of the Decade, an information note on ICN2 follow-up and the Decade has been prepared for the five Regional Conferences of FAO in 2020.¹⁸

Country commitments for action on nutrition

10. Poor dietary habits are among the leading risk factors for global deaths and global disease burden.¹⁹ The 2018 Global Nutrition Report shows that 88 percent of countries face a serious burden

⁵ http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA70/A70_30-en.pdf.

⁶ www.fao.org/3/a-mt359e.pdf.

⁷ www.fao.org/3/a-mu302e.pdf.

⁸ <https://undocs.org/A/72/829>.

⁹ www.fao.org/3/MX097EN/mx097en.pdf.

¹⁰ www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/bodies/COAG_Sessions/COAG_26/COAG26_INF/MX408_INF_6/MX408_COAG_2018_INF_6_en.pdf.

¹¹ http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB144/B144_50Rev1-en.pdf.

¹² http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA72/A72_58-en.pdf.

¹³ www.fao.org/3/mz353en/mz353en.pdf.

¹⁴ www.fao.org/3/na753en/na753en.pdf.

¹⁵ www.fao.org/about/meetings/sustainable-food-systems-nutrition-symposium/en/.

¹⁶ For Latin America and the Caribbean: San Salvador, 5-7 September 2017 (see <http://www.fao.org/3/mv793en/mv793en.pdf>); for Asia and the Pacific: Bangkok, 10-11 November 2017 (see <http://www.fao.org/3/mw246en/mw246en.pdf>); for Africa: Abidjan, 16-17 November 2017 (see <http://www.fao.org/3/mv683en/mv683en.pdf>); for Europe and Central Asia: Budapest, 4-5 December 2017 (see <http://www.fao.org/3/mw166en/mw166en.pdf>); and for the Near East and North Africa: Muscat, 11-12 December 2017 (see <http://www.fao.org/3/mw126en/mw126en.pdf>). In addition, see www.fao.org/about/meetings/sustainable-food-systems-nutrition-symposium/regional-symposia/en.

¹⁷ www.un.org/nutrition

¹⁸ 35th Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific; 35th Regional Conference for the Near East; 31st Regional Conference for Africa; 36th Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean; 32nd Regional Conference for Europe.

¹⁹ Health effects of dietary risks in 195 countries, 1990–2017: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2017. [www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(19\)30041-8/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)30041-8/fulltext).

from two or more forms of malnutrition and that most countries are off track to reach the global nutrition targets and none are making progress on the full suite of targets.²⁰

11. The UN General Assembly, having discussed the first progress report²¹ of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Decade, adopted resolution 72/306²² in July 2018, recognizing the progress made in advancing the Decade's implementation, while also expressing concern that the world was off track to achieve the global nutrition targets and called upon governments and their partners to intensify their efforts and scale up commitments and investments for nutrition under the Decade's Work Programme.

12. In its resolution 73/132 "Global Health and Foreign Policy: a healthier world through better nutrition"²³, adopted in December 2018, the UN General Assembly reiterated the importance of the Decade and its call for the scaling up of national commitments and increasing investments for nutrition.

13. Country commitments for action are therefore key to the Decade's support in leveraging government policy development, investments and actions on the ground as to meet the ICN2 commitments, the 2025 World Health Assembly global nutrition targets, the global diet-related NCD targets, and the nutrition-relevant targets in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Countries are therefore encouraged to set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART) commitments, which help all stakeholders understand what action is intended and to improve tracking.

14. In order to support the implementation of the Decade, FAO and WHO jointly developed in 2016-2018 a guide²⁴ for countries to translate the policies and actions recommended in the ICN2 Framework for Action into country-specific commitments, and a policy brief²⁵ on driving commitment for nutrition within the Decade.

15. During the 70th World Health Assembly in May 2017, Brazil and Ecuador were the first two countries to make official SMART commitments as part of the Decade, followed by Italy. The Government of Brazil made a set of 38 commitments, grouping them under the six action areas of the Decade's Work Programme, and outlined the specific policy measures to be undertaken to achieve the goals set. The Government of Ecuador reaffirmed its responsibility to fight all forms of malnutrition throughout the life cycle, and to take actions that address the determinants of health and nutrition. Italy started working on the Decade by launching a "National Working Group Tavolo Italy Decade for Nutrition" in July 2017 and launched a "Decade of Nutrition Platform" in July 2018 on the website of the Ministry of Health to share information on nutrition and healthy diets produced by national research institutes and ministries involved in this working group.²⁶

16. An open access database to formally register countries' SMART commitments was developed in 2017 and is co-facilitated by the joint FAO/WHO Secretariat of the Decade.²⁷

Country-led Action Networks

17. The Decade encourages and supports countries to strengthen collaboration on nutrition action by establishing Action Networks, which are informal coalitions of countries, with global or regional scope, aimed at accelerating and aligning efforts around specific topics linked to an action area of the Decade's Work Programme. Led and coordinated by one or several countries, the Action Networks allow countries to exchange knowledge and good practices, illustrate successes and challenges, and

²⁰ Global Nutrition Report 2018. <https://globalnutritionreport.org/reports/global-nutrition-report-2018/executive-summary/>.

²¹ <https://undocs.org/A/72/829>.

²² www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/72/306.

²³ www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/73/132.

²⁴ www.fao.org/3/ca1505en/CA1505EN.pdf.

²⁵ www.fao.org/3/ca1340en/CA1340EN.pdf.

²⁶ UN Decade of Action on Nutrition: Brazil, Ecuador and Italy make commitments, pp. 28-29

(www.ennonline.net/attachments/3087/NEX-11_English_25Jan19_V3.pdf).

²⁷ www.un.org/nutrition/commitments.

provide mutual support to accelerate progress in specific areas, with the final objective of improving food systems, diets and nutrition for all through the establishment of policies and legislation.²⁸

18. The following global action networks have been convened by Member countries under the Decade:

- a. Global Action Network on Sustainable Food from the Oceans and Inland Waters for Food Security and Nutrition – lead country: Norway.
- b. Global Action Network on Nutrition Labelling – lead countries: France, Australia and Chile.
- c. Global Action Network on Traditional, Healthy and Sustainable Diets – lead country: Italy.
- d. World Coalition on the Provision of Healthy School Meals – lead country: Germany.

19. Additionally, Member countries have convened several regional networks for the Americas and the Pacific, namely:

- a. Regional Action Network on Strategies for Reducing Salt Consumption for the Prevention and Control of Cardiovascular Disease in the Americas – lead countries: Brazil, Costa Rica and Colombia.
- b. Regional Action Network to Promote Food Guidelines in the Americas – lead countries: Brazil and Uruguay.
- c. Regional Action Network for the Americas on Food and Nutrition Security Governance – lead country: Brazil.
- d. Regional Action Network for the Americas on Public Purchasing of Family-produced Food – lead country: Brazil.
- e. Regional Action Network for the Americas on Sustainable School Feeding – lead country: Brazil.
- f. Regional Action Network for the Americas on Healthy Food Environments – lead country: Chile.
- g. Regional Action Network for Ending Childhood Obesity in the Pacific – lead country: Fiji.

20. In anticipation of the proposed International Year of Fruits and Vegetables in 2021, member countries are encouraged to establish an "action network on fruits and vegetables" with the aim of increasing their availability all year round to the entire population at an affordable price. This network can highlight the critical role fruits and vegetables can play in ensuring food security and nutrition, share knowledge and lessons learnt, for example, by introducing incentives to increase fruit and vegetable production, improving market level efficiencies, promoting investments in storage facilities at market places or reducing food loss and waste through packaging.

21. Climate variability and exposure to more frequent and intense climate extremes negatively affect rural incomes and access to food as agricultural production falls. Additionally, evidence shows that climate variability affects micronutrient content of crops.²⁹ This may compromise the quality of the food consumed and the diversity of the diets.³⁰ Member countries may consider the establishment of an "action network on climate resilience for improved nutrition" to share knowledge and lessons learned with implementing disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation policies and programmes that are also nutrition sensitive to strengthen the resilience of people's livelihoods and food systems climate effects.

²⁸ www.un.org/nutrition/action-networks.

²⁹

www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/F9D843CAD8E1153C64519D918F575CE1/S0029665115000026a.pdf/droughtresistant_cereals_impact_on_water_sustainability_and_nutritional_quality.pdf.

³⁰ www.fao.org/3/a-i5128e.pdf.

Mid-term review of the Decade

22. ECOSOC resolution 1989/84³¹ on international decades indicates that the implementation of a decade's programme of work should be appraised at the mid-point and at the end of the decade.
23. In keeping with resolution 1989/84, the status of implementation of commitments of the Rome Declaration on Nutrition should be reviewed at the mid-term and at the end of the Decade, in an open and participatory process. In this regard, the Decade's Work Programme foresees the convening of dialogues among stakeholders to evaluate further progress in implementing the Decade at mid-term and at the end of the Decade.
24. The Decade reaches its mid-term in 2020 and the joint FAO/WHO Decade Secretariat is preparing for its Mid-term Review (MTR).
25. The objectives of the MTR of the Decade³² are to assess and evaluate the achievements in individual policy areas of the ICN2 Framework for Action, as reflected in the actions areas of the Decade's Work Programme, over the period from 2016 to 2020, with a view to: (i) highlighting specific advances, initiatives and partnerships in nutrition during the first half of the Decade; and (ii) identifying the constraints encountered and the actions needed to overcome them during the second half of the Decade. Furthermore, the review will also identify focus areas for priority action for the second half of the Decade, and plan for the end-term review of the Decade and outline tentatively its possible format and modalities.
26. In terms of content, the MTR of the Decade will cover: (i) progress in specific action areas under the Decade, considering the broader developments regarding nutrition globally over the period from 2016 to 2020, with specific reference to the focus areas of the ICN2 Framework for Action; (ii) collaboration established and engagement of actors in implementing the first half of the Decade (2016-2020); (iii) progress in implementation modalities outlined in the Decade's Work Programme during the review period: commitments for action, action networks, forums and conferences, and evidence-informed advocacy and communication; and (iv) a synthetic forward-looking storyline based on the review of these different elements.
27. During the preparatory process toward the MTR of the Decade, a series of consultations and dialogues with various stakeholders at different levels will be convened, including an informal global consultation with member countries, following the model of the ICN2 Open-ended Working Group meetings. Delegates from Representations in Rome and Permanent Missions in Geneva, as well as non-State actors, could be brought together through videoconferencing facility to reflect on the progress achieved in implementing the Decade and on the way forward.
28. Moreover, an online consultation is foreseen to give all stakeholders at global, regional and country levels the possibility to contribute inputs to the MTR process, based on a set of guiding questions. The Tokyo N4G Summit 2020³³ will provide a space for taking stock and making new financial and policy commitments at the mid-term of the Decade. The CFS Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition,³⁴ currently being developed, will be an important contribution to help countries advancing action on some of the key policy areas and in collaboration with all stakeholders.
29. In conjunction with the MTR, a global conference/event will be organized to underline the achievements of the first half of the Decade (2016-2020) and set the stage for the priorities during its second half. Such a conference/event could be convened in coincidence with the High-Level Political Forum, scheduled to take place in New York in July 2020.³⁵
30. The conference may wish to provide guidance on further actions in the way forward from the perspective of the region, including in respect of the MTR of the Decade.

³¹ https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/75597/files/E_RES_1989_84-EN.pdf.

³² www.un.org/nutrition/sites/www.un.org.nutrition/files/general/pdf/conceptnote_mtr_nutrition_decade.pdf.

³³ <https://nutritionforgrowth.org/>.

³⁴ www.fao.org/cfs/workingspace/workstreams/nutrition-workstream/en/.

³⁵ Information on the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development is available here: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>