



UNSCN

United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition

A world free from hunger and all forms of malnutrition is attainable in this generation

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UNSCN Quarterly Update – Fall 2016

Meeting our members



UNSCN members met early November 2016 for an exceptional third meeting since UNSCN secretariat opened its new office in the FAO premises earlier in the year. This series of face-to-face discussions was essential to enable the issuing of the UNSCN Strategic Plan (2016-2020) - clarifying UNSCN's mandate, role and activities - and to reach agreement on the direction of UNSCN work plan for 2017.

Mr Daniel Gustafson, FAO Deputy Director-General noted in his opening

remarks that the membership of the UNSCN continues to grow, showing the multi-disciplinary nature of nutrition. The group welcomed Victor Aguayo, the new Chief of Nutrition at UNICEF; the new UNSCN members OCHA, UNEP and UNHCR; and benefited from the gender expertise of UNWOMEN.

“UNSCN builds on the mandate and strengths of its members, and works according to a principle of subsidiarity to ensure maximum impact while avoiding duplication of efforts” explained Michel Mordasini, UNSCN Chair. He showcased examples of his work to continue to mobilize support with examples from his meetings with UN-DESA and UN-DOCO and the co-chair of the undg for the UNSCN to contribute "nutrition guidelines" in the context of the revision of the UNDAF-process. Mr Mordasini is also working to reestablish accountability and reporting line between UNSCN and ECOSOC. “UNSCN has not only a role, but also a responsibility, to advance and support joint efforts across the UN system, focusing on the overall direction, scale, coherence and impact of the UN system response to the world nutrition problems.”

Representatives from ten UN agencies, as well as from the CFS Secretariat and the UN Network for SUN, addressed issues of global governance for nutrition, conflict of interest, and the renewed nutrition strategies of UNSCN members. A report will be made available on the new UNSCN website.

Evaluating the success of nutrition interventions

UNSCN members have long been promoting the benefits of breastfeeding as one of the most effective ways to ensure the health of children. Breast milk is safe, clean and contains the antibodies needed to

protect children from a number of common childhood illnesses. Moreover, breastfeeding aids healthy growth, reduces the prevalence of stunting and helps to protect infants from obesity and non-communicable diseases. It also has significant health benefits for the mother, including by reducing the risk of breast cancer.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is doing its part by proving how stable isotopes can be used to measure the effectiveness of government programmes to protect, promote and support breastfeeding. By providing the much needed data and evidence to support breastfeeding, IAEA is raising awareness on the need for greater investments to scale up proven interventions.

IAEA hosted its 60th IAEA General Conference in September 2016 at the Vienna International Centre (VIC) in Vienna, Austria. The event was well attended by high-level representatives from all IAEA Member States. Participants were invited to consider a range of issues, including the possibility of using nuclear techniques to evaluate the success of national breastfeeding programmes. See more about the event [here](#).

Raising the Profile of Nutrition in International and Intergovernmental Platforms

For over a year, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) has been ramping up its focus on nutrition. During its annual plenary meeting in October 2016 (CFS43), the Committee approved a concrete nutrition agenda for the CFS, including the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition Report, which will serve as a basis for future policy convergence work and CFS's contribution to the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025). You can help shape its development by commenting on the V0 draft of the report available [here](#). The final report will be presented at CFS 44 in October 2017.

During CFS 43, UNSCN hosted the side event [Ensuring nutritious diets in a climate constrained world](#) to present examples of how we can safeguard our planet while making healthy, diverse and balanced diets available for all. The projected 51% increase in food-associated greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 could be reduced to seven percent if WHO Dietary Guidelines were adopted globally. The New Nordic Diet, the Brazilian Regional Food initiative and The Costa Rican Framework Law of Human Right for Food and Nutritional Security show us how this can be achieved.

Food systems – from producer to consumer – are created by a multitude of decisions from individuals, companies and governments about what and how to produce, process, market and consume; all of which have a positive or negative impact on the environment. Guidance on how to make investments with long-term beneficial nutrition and health outcomes is key. The UNSCN discussion paper [Investment for Healthy Food Systems: Implementing the Framework for Action of the Second International Conference on Nutrition](#) provides recommendations in that direction and will serve as the basis for discussion at the first intercessional event of the CFS Open Ended Working Group on Nutrition, to be held in February 2017.

Fostering Cross-Sectoral Dialogue on Nutrition and Trade

In the context of FAO's Committee on Commodity Problems, the theme of the 2016 Ministerial meeting was '[Long-term Commodity Price Trends and Sustainable Agricultural Development](#)'. During this meeting held in October 2016 at the FAO HQ (Rome), Ministers were invited to share their views and experiences on the difficulties decision makers face when designing policies to address declining

agricultural prices and increased volatility, and the ability of institutions to provide a coordinated response to agricultural development. Michel Mordasini, Chair of the UNSCN and Vice-President of IFAD participated in the ministerial meeting and presented the highlights of the UNSCN [Trade and Nutrition: Opportunities and Risks](#) event (June 2016), thus ensuring continuity in the debate about trade and nutrition.

Trade also featured in Dr. Hilal Elver's latest report on nutrition. Presented to the United Nations Human Rights Council in October 2016, the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food report argues that, by increasing trade liberalization and foreign direct investment by transnational corporations, has led to a surge in low-cost, ultra-processed foods onto the global market. This influx and related marketing by the food industry has had serious negative impacts on diets and health.

The report also analyses various shortcomings, such as the inability of the global governance system to provide adequate safeguard against conflicts of interest. While there is a role for all actors to play, appropriate guidelines and mechanism to regulate harmful interventions need to be strengthened. Dr. Elver underlines the need for corporations in the food and nutrition industry to respect human rights and contribute to equitable access to nutrition foods. The full report is available [here](#).

The Drumbeat of the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the world has committed to eradicate hunger and eliminate all forms of malnutrition by 2030. The [UN Decade of Action on Nutrition \(2016-2025\)](#) proclaimed by the UN General Assembly on 1 April 2016 calls for accelerated global action to achieve this goal.

FAO and WHO, as co-convenors of this global collective effort, have led a series of consultations to advance the implementation of the Decade. The most recent events were hosted during the [71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly](#) (UNGA 71) and during the [43rd Committee on World Food Security](#) (CFS).

Setting out the Work Programme of the Decade is an inclusive, continuous and collaborative process, building upon and connecting the independent initiatives of governments and their many partners. The UNSCN is supporting these efforts by collecting the ideas and contributions of all relevant actors through [online discussions](#) and by exploring the issues raised through its upcoming flagship publication, SCN News.

FAO/WHO International Symposium on Sustainable Food Systems for Healthy Diets and Improved Nutrition

Building on the outcomes of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), FAO and WHO have joined efforts again to prepare the FAO/WHO International Symposium on Sustainable Food Systems for Healthy Diets and Improved Nutrition. To be held from 1-2 December 2016 at the FAO HQ, Rome, the symposium will explore the policies and programmes required to establish food systems that deliver healthy diets.

The symposium takes a systems approach and will concentrate on three main sub-themes:

1. Supply side policies and measures for increasing access to healthy diets.

2. Demand side policies and measures for increasing access and empowering consumers to choose healthy diets.
3. Measures to strengthen accountability, resilience, and equity within the food system.

More than 350 participants from all stakeholder groups have been invited to the event, which will also serve as an opportunity to share ICN2 follow-up efforts taking place at the country level. Further information is available [here](#).

New Resources

The [FAO Compendium of Indicators for Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture](#) is a simple guide is for those responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of investment projects in food and agriculture (including and in addition to value chains, social development, and rural development) that need to demonstrate that they lead to intermediary results toward improved nutrition. This compendium aims to gather the main existing nutrition-relevant indicators that can be used for M&E of food and agriculture investments, and to show which type of investments each type of indicator is most appropriate for.

This compendium is a companion to the existing publication [Designing Nutrition-Sensitive Agricultural Investments](#), the newly published interactive e-learning modules on [Improving Nutrition through Agriculture and Food Systems](#) and complements the [Guidelines on the Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women](#).

Upcoming UNSCN members events

14-18 November: Second Regular Session of the WFP Executive Board

1-2 December: The FAO/WHO International Symposium on Sustainable Food Systems for Healthy Diets and Improved Nutrition

5-9 December: FAO Council - 155th Session

14-15 December: 119th Session of the IFAD Executive Board