

UNSCN Quarterly Update – Spring 2017



UNSCN Turns 40

2017 marks UNSCN's 40th anniversary. This journey started in April 1977 when the Sub-Committee on Nutrition (SCN) was established by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

Throughout its history, UNSCN has coordinated and sponsored many activities to promote research and improvements on nutrition. The International Workshop on Nutritional Surveillance (1981) and the International Conference on Iron Deficiency and Behavioral Development (1989) are two primary examples. Activities such as these triggered various publications, most notably the series of Nutrition Policy Papers (NPP) from 1985, and shortly after with the Reports on the World Nutrition Situation (RWNS) from 1987, which served as a leading source of reports, trends, and statistics in the context of world nutrition situation. In 1988, UNSCN began producing the peer reviewed periodical *UN SCN News*, its flagship publication. By 1993, UNSCN had also developed the Refugee Nutrition Information System (RNIS), a quarterly report that featured nutritional information and situation analysis on emergency-affected populations, which became the Nutrition Information in Crisis Situations (NICS) in 2004. At the request of the communities it served, UNSCN also established time-bound communities of practice to advance the analysis and discussion of key nutrition topics. This evolution took place under the guidance of the (to date) twelve Chairs and six Technical Secretaries that have dedicated their knowledge and expertise to build and maintain a rich and secure platform for the UN system agencies and non-UN organizations.

In 2016, UNSCN adopted a new Strategic Plan for the period 2016-2020, coinciding with the first five years of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition. It also commissioned a paper on [Global Governance for Nutrition](#) to enable the wider nutrition community to better understand the role of UNSCN in the significantly evolved nutrition landscape. A second paper has since been produced making the link between the global targets, the actions and the relevant actors working on nutrition to help provide clarity and streamline efforts. This paper will become available on the UNSCN website in April 2017. It has been decided by CFS stakeholders that two UNSCN papers developed in 2016 - [Investment for Healthy Food Systems](#) and [Impact Assessment of Policies to Support Healthy Food Environments and Healthy Diets](#) – will serve as the foundation document for the upcoming CFS OEWG on Nutrition intersectional meetings (9 May and 26 May 2017) held at FAO HQ.

[...] Read the article in full [here](#). UNSCN's 2016 Annual Report is available [here](#).

International Women's Day

On 8 March, the world united in celebration of International Women's Day (IWD) under the theme "Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50:50 by 2030". This is a day to reflect on progress made, to call for change and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by women.

In commemoration of IWD, FAO, IFAD and WFP hosted the event "Step It Up Together with Rural Women to End Hunger and Poverty" at the FAO HQ in Rome, Italy. In his opening statement, Michel Mordasini, UNSCN Chair and Vice President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) explained how IFAD learned through their experience in the field that overcoming gender inequality is integral to transforming rural areas. "Better income, education, health and decision-making power for women have a direct and dramatic impact on the well-being of the whole family, as well as on the nutritional status and health of their children," he said. As a specialized UN agency and an international financial institution focused on the needs of smallholder farmers and poor rural people, IFAD highlighted that 50% of all rural people currently receiving services from IFAD-supported projects are women. Of those 57 million women, about 12 million have benefitted from gender empowerment initiatives. "Women represent close to 70% of participants in our capacity-building programs for community management, business skills and micro-entrepreneurship, versus 40% ten years ago. Similar strong results are reported in IFAD-assisted microfinance institutions, where today women account for 54% of active borrowers and 63% of voluntary savers" explained Mr Mordasini.

[...] *Read the article in full [here](#).*

Nutrition Decade: The momentum is building

After several rounds of consultation in 2016 to agree on the scope and the vision for the Nutrition Decade, FAO and WHO as co-conveners produced its first draft work programme. The work programme is designed to be a living document, building upon and connecting the independent initiatives of governments and their many partners and will be adapted according to needs and lessons learned.

To ensure that the work programme presented the compelling vision necessary to enable strategic interaction and mutual support across existing initiatives and programmes, several additional rounds of consultation took place. These include the UNSCN-led online consultation (30 January to 26 February), the CFS Open Ended Working Group on Nutrition (10 February), the Informal Briefing with the Permanent Representatives of FAO and WHO both in Rome and Geneva (27 February) and the Consultation meeting with Member States in Geneva (22 March).

Some of the main highlights are available [here](#). You can also access the outcomes of the first online consultation that served to help shape the Nutrition Decade [here](#). Comments received through the FSN Forum on its first draft work programme are [here](#).

The deliberations of these consultations will serve to strengthen a final work programme of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition which will be made available to Member States during the World Health Assembly (May 2017) and the FAO Conference (June 2017).

As initiatives are coordinated and energies align, the drumbeat of the Nutrition Decade gets louder!

Climate Change, Healthy Diets and Nutrition

In a world challenged by climate change and a growing population, with evolving food demands and a variety of health challenges, we need to be smarter and fairer about what and how we produce and consume food.

Many countries have already taken action to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change, however, meeting the challenge requires an integrated and coherent approach to minimize trade-offs. UNSCN is working to help governments work through those compromises by hosting a panel discussion during the ECOSOC Coordination and Management Meeting on 20 April 2017. The event will explore the interlinkages between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement, particularly through the climate change and healthy diets nexus. Panelists, including the Chair of the CFS and the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, will help identify policy options to ensure that measures to mitigate climate change do not undermine the nutrition efforts of countries, nor affect the right to adequate food. The discussions will also inform the work of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development, as SDG2 will be reviewed in depth during the upcoming HLPF convened under the auspices of ECOSOC in July 2017.

The findings of the recent UNSCN study on climate change, healthy diets and nutrition will also be presented during the panel discussion. The Discussion Paper analyses the various types of food production systems, along with i) their vulnerability to climate change, ii) their impact on the climate and biodiversity and iii) their health and nutrition outcomes. Since all of these aspects are interconnected and country specific, it then provides examples from countries that have taken these factors under consideration in their national strategies, such as through sustainable dietary guidelines and national adaptation plans. Since commitment to action by Member States is essential, it then makes the linkages between the global frameworks and the agreed commitments under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Sustainable Development Goals, the Nutrition Decade, the World Health Assembly, and the Second International Conference on Nutrition. And since our dietary choices aren't governed by international processes alone, it also considers the awareness raising and safeguards required to promote healthy eating. The paper argues that, by increasing the focus on the quality of foods produced and lowering industrialized meat production and the global consumption of ultra-processed foods, we could effectively address malnutrition while improving human health and the wellbeing of our planet.

The outcome of the meeting will be an informal summary by the ECOSOC Vice-President, highlighting the main conclusions and policy recommendations. UNSCN will make those, and their recent study, available soon.

Meeting our members

Senior-level representation from a dozen UN agencies and committees met at IFAD HQ on 30 March 2017 to share newly developed policies and guidelines, as well as jointly establish inputs for discussion papers about emerging issues.

Mr Michel Mordasini, UNSCN Chair and Vice President of the IFAD noted in his opening remarks that the membership of the UNSCN continues to grow, showing the multi-disciplinary nature of nutrition. "I am convinced that this coming together, this alignment of efforts, is exactly what we need during our UN Decade of Action on Nutrition," said Mr. Mordasini.

Participants reviewed the process for upcoming publications, such as a joint statement about severe and moderate acute malnutrition and schools as a platform for the improvement of nutrition. Further discussion took place on how best to ensure that the guidelines and joint statements generated by this group result in long-standing improvements in programme implementation in-country. UNSCN member meetings also provide an opportunity to take stock of the strategies and policies of the member agencies; to further raise the level of understanding of the focus areas of each institution and the ways in which nutritional needs are addressed.

The group also thanked Martin Bloem for his years of service to the work of the UNSCN and wished him all the best as he begins his retirement.

Nutrition work of IATF articulated and approved by IATF

In October 2016, members of the UN Interagency Task Force on NonCommunicable Diseases (IATF on NCDs) decided to establish a thematic working group on nutrition. As convener of the group, the UNSCN Secretariat articulated its work plan and deliverables.

The objectives and activities of this working group include:

- Improve awareness and understanding of the Right to Food and underlying factors of several forms of malnutrition and diet-related NCDs and their policy implications;
- Improve policy coherence among UN Agencies, programmes, funds and related intergovernmental organizations to ensure effective development and implementation;
- Increase coordination of policy and programme actions related to nutrition and diet-related NCDs;
- Provide support to countries and regions in developing and implementing national and regional NCD strategies and action plans, as part of a healthy environment and integrated health system.

The thematic group will be mainly active at global policy level but will contribute to the UNIATF country support in the development of policies and programmes for the prevention and control of NCDs. The working group will contribute to the implementation of the NCD action plan (2013-2020) and will work according to the principles established in the NCD work plan.

Hidden Hunger Conference 2017

The [3rd International Congress Hidden Hunger: Post 2015 agenda and Sustainable Development Goals](#) was held in Stuttgart, Germany from 20-22 March 2017. The event, which convened political parties and industry representatives as well as representatives of civil society and advocacy groups, aimed to address the question of how far the Post-2015 Agenda and other programs and measures adopted in 2015 to fight against world famine and poverty have already been implemented.

The UNSCN Coordinator contributed to a panel discussion advocating for trans disciplinary research and for research to support the development of coherent policies that integrate several sectoral policies. Additional information is available [here](#).

Strengthening and Implementing Nutrition Monitoring and Surveillance: Lessons from the field

The global meeting on nutrition monitoring and surveillance *Strengthening and Implementing Nutrition Monitoring and Surveillance: Lessons from the field* took place in Geneva on 23-24 March 2017, co-

organised by WHO and UNICEF. This meeting brought together various partners working in nutrition monitoring to share experiences and discuss lessons learned as we embark on the next phase of nutrition monitoring in the era of SDGs. For example, the Accelerating Nutrition Improvements initiative, implemented by the WHO in 11 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, is a project that has improved nutrition surveillance through the strengthening of health information systems.

The UNSCN Coordinator participated in the discussions on this important theme, specifically in the context of the Nutrition Decade. The UN Decade of Action on Nutrition seeks to accelerate nutrition actions and impact, which need to be tracked in-country to assess progress towards the internationally agreed nutrition targets. Additional information is available [here](#).

Publications / Upcoming News

Call for Papers - Public Health Panorama Deadline for submission: 31 May 2017

Public Health Panorama, the journal of the WHO Regional Office for Europe, calls for the submission of papers for a special issue on obesity and unhealthy diets in the WHO European Region. This will be published in December 2017 and will focus on innovative policy and practice from across the European Region. As the midway point in the implementation of the WHO European Food and Nutrition Action Plan 2015–2020 approaches, the special issue offers an opportunity to reflect upon lessons learnt, explore some of challenges and consider novel approaches to drive further progress in the coming years.

Authors should follow the guidelines for submission of manuscripts to Public Health Panorama and mention this call for papers in a covering letter. All submissions will undergo peer review. For further queries, please contact eupanorama@who.int

Further details are available [here](#).

New request for Proposal - Collaborative Research Initiative

Deadline for submission: 15 April 2017

The Sackler Institute for Nutrition Science, a program of the New York Academy of Sciences, invites research proposals to focus on the study of occupational status among adolescent girls and young women, as well as on the timing of nutritional interventions. The Sackler Institute for Nutrition Science will fund up to nine grants of \$50,000 each. Grantees will become part of a collaborative research initiative aimed at advancing the state of knowledge in adolescent women nutrition and guide program implementation. Applicants must be affiliated to academic institutions and not-for-profit research organizations, anywhere in the world. We encourage projects that are taking a multi-disciplinary approach. More information is available [here](#).

Guidelines on assessing biodiverse foods in dietary surveys

The FAO and Bioversity International have jointly published these scientific guidelines on collecting information on food biodiversity through dietary assessment surveys, to assist researchers and practitioners in collecting more reliable data and to implement best practices in this regard. It is a step-by-step guide which describes the tasks to be undertaken in assessing the availability of food biodiversity and identifying biodiverse foods with sufficient taxonomic detail for incorporation into dietary intake surveys, and provides an understanding on how to adapt dietary assessment tools to

capture biodiverse foods at national, regional and community levels. A tool that can be used to improving the scientific evidence base for biodiversity and nutrition, the guidelines contribute to the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Mainstreaming Biodiversity into Policies, Programmes and National and Regional Plans of Action on Nutrition, endorsed by the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) during the Fifteenth Regular Session in January 2015. More information is available [here](#).

UNSCN welcomes you to visit our [website](#) for the latest trainings and upcoming events.

Upcoming Nutrition Related Events

7 April: [World Health Day](#) (WHA/A.2/Res.35)

21-23 April: [World Bank Spring Meeting](#)

24 April - 5 May: [16th Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues](#), UN HQ

9 May: [CFS OEWG on Nutrition intersectional meeting](#), FAO HQ

26 May: [CFS OEWG on Nutrition intersectional meeting](#), FAO HQ

22 May: [International Day for Biological Diversity](#) (A/RES/55/201)

22-31 May: [Seventieth World Health Assembly](#), WHO HQ

26-27 May: [G7](#), Taormina, Italy

30 May–1 June 2017: [International Conference on the IAEA Technical Cooperation Programme: Sixty Years and Beyond](#)

5 June: [World Environment Day](#) (A/RES/2994 (XXVII))

12-13 June: [EAT Stockholm Food Forum](#), Sweden

12-13 June: [G20 Conference on Africa](#), Germany

20 June: [World Refugee Day](#) (A/RES/55/76)

21-23 June: 1st Global Conference of the 10YFP Sustainable Food Systems Programme, South Africa

7-8 July: [G20 Summit](#), Germany

10 July: [FAO Council's 155th Session](#), FAO HQ

10-19 July: [High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#), UN HQ