

UNSCN YEAR REPORT 2019

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

From 2005 to 2015, the world observed a steady decline in food insecurity – this is no longer true. Globally, estimates suggest that more than 820 million people still go hungry, 35 million more than in 2015. Moreover, more than 150 million children under the age of five are stunted, which means they did not grow to their full potential. At the same time, almost 2.3 billion children and adults are overweight. Hunger and overweight are not separate phenomena. In more than a third of low- and middle-income countries the different forms of malnutrition overlap in individuals, families and communities, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, south Asia, and east Asia and the Pacific.

All forms of malnutrition have a common solution – food systems that provide all people with safe and affordable, sustainable healthy diets, while protecting the planet. This is not yet the case. Addressing malnutrition effectively requires transformative actions across food systems – from production and processing, through trade and distribution, pricing, marketing and labelling, to consumer awareness, consumption and waste. The UN family needs to be well coordinated in order to best assist Member States to transform food systems as well as to include nutrition in their efforts to reach universal health coverage.

In 2019, UNSCN continued its work to maximize UN System-wide policy coherence and coordination on nutrition in support of Member States. Effective advocacy and policy coherence require UNSCN Members to jointly build and disseminate robust narratives on nutrition challenges and their solutions. To this end, UNSCN has continued to forge ties between its Members, furthering the debate towards common understanding and promoting consistent messages within the United Nations System and beyond. The UNSCN formulated global guidelines for nutrition policies and programming. Collaboration between Members helped to identify synergies and ways of optimizing available resources. By engaging with various processes and platforms, the UNSCN was able to underscore the importance of coherently addressing nutrition for help achieving Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. I am very appreciative of UNSCN's ability to convene global actors, connect ideas from across disciplines and break silos to deliver knowledge products that help accelerate action to address malnutrition in all its forms.

As ad interim Chair of the UNSCN, it has been my great privilege to work with the UNSCN Members in 2019 to ensure and further strengthen UN System-wide coherence and coordination arrangements on nutrition, by merging capacities of UNSCN and UN Network for SUN. It is proposed that the robust entity resulting from the merger be called **UN Nutrition**. This evolution of the existing mechanisms is a tremendous opportunity for global nutrition. It will make UNSCN Members even more able to jointly and coherently assist Member States and the entire international community in tackling the urgent malnutrition challenges, during second half of the Decade of Action on Nutrition, for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. We look forward to these exciting times ahead of us, for people's improved nutrition and well-being, leaving no one behind.

Amir Abdulla

Chair of the UNSCN ad interim
Deputy Executive Director WFP

I. 2019 AT A GLANCE

The year, 2019, was a momentous year of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition as its mid-way point approaches. Dialogues with stakeholders took place in 2019, and will continue in 2020, to assess progress and appraise specific advances, initiatives and partnerships in nutrition over the first five years and to identify focus areas for priority action in its second half. The UNSCN actively supported this key step of the implementation of the Decade, as requested by UNGA resolution 70/259¹.

The year 2019 was also a crucial milestone for UN System-wide coherence and coordination on nutrition. UNSCN members took firm steps towards the merger of the UNSCN and UN Network for SUN Secretariats for a reinforced UN coordination arrangement on nutrition at global and country levels. The merger aims at bringing the working capacities of the two entities to the next level by establishing a renewed entity to be called **UN Nutrition**. Cornelia Richter, Vice-President of IFAD, set the merger in motion as UNSCN Chair through November 2019. She was replaced on an interim basis by WFP Deputy Executive Director Amir Abdulla, who is now charged with bringing the merger to fruition.

This past year also served to strengthen the synergies between the strategies, work plans and priorities of UNSCN members. Helping to build bridges between development challenges and mitigation actions happening around the world and ensuring a continuum of information sharing.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

- Throughout 2019, seizing the opportunity provided by the Decade of Action on Nutrition, the UNSCN Members and Secretariat worked strategically, identifying potential synergies between the thematic discussions happening at a variety of global fora and promoting integrated and comprehensive approaches to tackle malnutrition in all its forms. Knowledge gaps were identified - particularly on water, and on urban-rural linkages - during the UNSCN-hosted *EGM Linking Nutrition with the SDGs under Review*. In 2019, UNSCN developed breakthrough discussion papers emphasizing these two crucial interlinkages and proposing ways move forwards together.
- Commitments to the Decade were fostered by the UNSCN by a variety of means. The UNSCN Secretariat assisted the co-facilitators, FAO and WHO, in updating the UN General Assembly on UN agencies and other stakeholders' contributions to the Decade in 2019. It also assisted in the planning of the Decade's mid-term review. UNSCN knowledge products of 2019, as well as the ones produced before, will inform the review and remain widely used in 2020 and beyond.
- The uptake of UNSCN products continued throughout 2019, as demonstrated by the steady increase of subscriptions to the UNSCN e-alerts and newsletters, Communities of practices and social media channels. Organizations from a variety of focus areas invited UNSCN to co-host events to help increase the understanding of improved nutrition as an essential component of achieving the SDGs.
- The UNSCN and UN Network for SUN Secretariats worked closer together towards a merger to increase efficiencies and strengthen UN System-wide coordinating arrangements on nutrition. New Terms of Reference were developed by the Deputy Executive Directors of FAO, IFAD, WHO, WFP and UNICEF for evolving the two entities to **UN Nutrition**. In early 2020, the ToRs have been approved by the agencies' Principals for their full implementation by the end of 2020.

¹ UN General Assembly 70th session, April 2016, A/RES/70/259

II. 2019 IN DETAIL

ii.1 ACTIONS IN DIRECT SUPPORT TO THE NUTRITION DECADE

In 2016, United Nations General Assembly Resolution 70/259² proclaimed the Decade of Action on Nutrition calling upon the UNSCN, in its coordinating function, to support its implementation. In 2019, the UNSCN supported the co-conveners of the Decade, FAO and WHO, to facilitate carrying through the Decade's workplan.

The UNSCN Secretariat continued to promote the Decade in a variety of fora, fomenting commitments from its Members and other actors considering their mandates and comparative advantages. The UNSCN assisted the Decade's Secretariat in reporting on commitments made by UN members, as well as their progress on meeting them. UNSCN Member agencies made solid progress on meeting prior commitments to the Decade, demonstrating the complementarity of their mandates and efforts, as reported by the UNSCN to ECOSOC³. In addition to the solid work undertaken by UN agencies in 2019, UNSCN associates **HarvestPlus** (CGIAR member) met and advanced commitments it had made the previous year, while the **International Livestock Research Institute** (ILRI – CGIAR member) made a new commitment. In addition, commitments were advanced in 2019 by the **Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition (GLOPAN)** and by **CARE**.

ILRI stated its full support the United Nations' Decade of Action on Nutrition. In particular, the institute committed to continue working with research partners to better understand the incentives and barriers for consumption of animal-source foods and to increase the availability, access and affordability of animal-source foods for poor producers and consumers in low- and middle-income countries. ILRI's commitment includes identifying and promoting practices for assuring the safety of animal-source foods, especially in informal markets, as well as practices that will reduce the environmental footprint of livestock, including their greenhouse gas emissions.

GLOPAN pledged their support to the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition through their reports, which provide substantive modelling and analysis to help policymakers better understand trends in agriculture and diets and to estimate costs/benefits of new agriculture and food policies, as well as through their convening capacity to bring together policymakers from different sectors of food systems to engage them in the challenge of tackling malnutrition in all its forms. GLOPAN will continue delivering evidence and tools to encourage and support governments in low- and middle-income countries as they design and implement food and nutrition policies, as well as working with international and regional partners to foster changes in food systems that will shift dietary trends in the direction of better nutrition and improved health.

CARE pledged its support to the Decade of Action on Nutrition. As governments and stakeholders increasingly commit to the Decade, and new action networks are formed, CARE will seek pathways for collaboration to support common goals. CARE will also continue to advocate for just and sustainable food and water systems to provide healthy and nutritious diets, engaging governments, the private sector, international bodies, and partners, including in non-traditional spaces.

² UN General Assembly 70th session, April 2016, A/RES/70/259

³ The UNSCN 2019 Annual Progress Report to be submitted in spring 2020

UNSCN secretariat contributed to the development of Nutrition Decade related products, including the Biennial Progress Report of the UN Secretary General to be submitted to UNGA in early 2020. All formal commitments are published at the [UNSCN website](#).

Throughout 2019, The UNSCN Secretariat continued to moderate the Nutrition Decade's main Twitter feed, sharing information on achievements, publications and events, and highlighting the latest news. Relevant information was also shared in newsletters and on [webpages](#) dedicated to the Nutrition Decade.

Linking Water and Nutrition Decades

The UNSCN Secretariat took a leading role in promoting links between the Decade of Action on Nutrition and the United Nations International Decade for Action on Water for Sustainable Development in a follow-up to the June 2018 Expert Group Meeting on Linking Nutrition with the SDGs, organized by UNSCN at United Nations Headquarters in New York. UNSCN co-organized the side-event, [The multiple bridges connecting the water-nutrition divide: What's new?](#) at [World Water Week](#), organized by the Stockholm International Water Institute in August 2019.

To inform these dialogues and further the interlinkages, the UNSCN produced and launched the discussion paper [Water and Nutrition: Harmonizing Actions for the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition and the United Nations Water Action Decade](#), under the co-authorship of the CGIAR Research Programme on Water, Land and Ecosystems and the Land and Water division (CBL) of FAO's Climate, Biodiversity, Land and Water Department.

As highlighted at the discussion paper, progress for both SDG 2 and SDG 6 has been unsatisfactory, with several indicators worsening over time, including an increase in the number of undernourished, overweight and obese people, as well as rapid increases in the number of people at risk of severe water shortages. This lack of progress is exacerbated by climate change and growing regional and global inequities in food and water security, including access to good quality diets, leading to increased violation of the human rights to water and food. Reversing these trends will require a much greater effort on the part of water, food security, and nutrition communities, including stronger performances by two Decades. The UNSCN Discussion Paper analyses the complex web of pathways that link water, food security and nutrition outcomes. Climate change and the growing demand for water resources are also considered, given their central role in shaping future water and nutrition security. It calls for increased and systematic collaboration between the nutrition and water sectors and actors, to be able to reach both the water and nutrition targets and the 2030 Agenda.

ii.2 ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN TO FULFIL UNSCN'S FOUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

In further support of the Decade of Action on Nutrition, in 2019, UNSCN continued to work to meet its four strategic objectives (SO), as set out in its Strategic Plan (2016–2020). UNSCN work streams intersect and serve more than one SO. To avoid repetition, the 2019 achievements are then reported only once.

SO1 - maximize UN policy coherence and advocacy on nutrition

Effectively supporting Member States and building capacities to accelerate actions to improve nutrition require that the different UN agencies speak in one voice on nutrition challenges and their solutions, without competing agendas around different priorities. To this end, it is essential for UNSCN Members to jointly build and disseminate robust narratives on what the problems are, what are their causes and how to tackle them with context and country specific solutions.

UNSCN discussion papers and other knowledge products are produced expressing these agreed narratives, further building and communicating them within the United Nations System and beyond. The agreed messages are coherently delivered by the UNSCN members and secretariat at UNSCN organized, co-organized and/or attended nutrition-related global, regional and national events, plus events organized by its Members and associates. In 2019, among other events, UNSCN Secretariat participated, delivered statements and/or was engaged in side-events at the 74th Session of the **UN General Assembly** and in the following intergovernmental processes of its members: the 72nd Session of the **World Health Assembly**, the 41st Session of the **FAO Conference** on the 161st, 162nd and 163rd sessions of the **FAO Council**, in the 4th session of the **UN Environment Assembly**, and at the twenty-fifth session of the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change Conference of the Parties - **UNFCCC COP 25**.

In addition to promoting UN System-wide policy coherence on nutrition, through participating in such meetings of the United Nations governing bodies and other international fora, the UNSCN was able to help further the debate on the links between nutrition and other development challenges, such as climate change, environmental protection, urbanization, the rural–urban nexus, health, agriculture, gender mainstreaming and development financing.

Throughout 2019, sustainable healthy diets and their linkages with climate change were consistently promoted by the UNSCN, helping raise awareness on the urgent need for transforming food systems and build momentum for such transformative actions.

Sustainable food systems for better nutrition in the context of climate change:

The global food system — in other words, the types of foods produced and how they are processed, traded, retailed and marketed — has a huge potential to be more sustainable and promote healthier diets. Food systems need to be transformed to be able to feed the growing world’s population within planetary boundaries while responding to an ever-changing climate, adaptable to the transformation of urban and rural settings, and alert to competing vested interests. The UNSCN discussion paper [*Sustainable Diets for Healthy People and a Healthy Planet*](#) was developed by UNSCN in 2017 by a core team of UNSCN experts including the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, UN Environment, Bioversity with inputs from OCHA, WHO and FAO. Since its launch, the outcomes of this report have been presented and discussed at several international events and are cited in the breakthrough 2019 report: the [*EAT-Lancet Commission report on Food, Planet, Health*](#) . Another ground breaking report: the [*Lancet Commission Report on the Global Syndemic of Obesity, Undernutrition and Climate Change*](#) looks at underlying and systemic causes of the global syndemic. Interesting to note is the fact that the findings presented in this well developed and well researched report are fully in line and reflect the same arguments presented earlier by UNSCN discussion papers on *Sustainable Diets for Healthy People and a Healthy Planet* as well as on *Global governance for nutrition and the role of UNSCN*.

In 2019, UNSCN worked in close collaboration with UN Environment to streamline the findings of this and other of its discussion papers into several opportunities at the [4th Session of the UN Environment Assembly UNEA-4](#), in Nairobi, in March 2019:

- The UNSCN-hosted event on ***Sustainable Food Systems for Healthy People and a Healthy Planet*** at the at the Second UN Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment (8-10 March): UNSCN highlighted the findings of its publication during two sessions: Session 1 - Agricultural transformation (9 March) and Session 2 - Diets, nutrition and climate change (10 March).
- The ***Environment Management Group Nexus Dialogue on Sustainable Food Systems: ensuring food security for future generations*** on 12 March: UNSCN moderated the high-level session of this dialogue.
- The ***Cities Summit*** on 13 March: In the face of economic development, urbanization, and tighter global connections, food systems and dietary patterns are changing rapidly. Building on UNSCN

statements [The double burden of malnutrition: a challenge for cities worldwide](#) (2006), *Nutrition security of urban populations* (2012), and the work to link nutrition with sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11) at the UNSCN hosted [Expert Group Meeting on nutrition and the SDG](#) (June 2018, UN HQ, New York), UNSCN highlighted the unique specificities that urban and peri-urban environments present.

- The *Leadership Dialogue : Environmental challenges related to poverty and natural resources management, including sustainable food systems, food security and halting biodiversity loss* on 14 March: The Dialogue focused on how food systems are putting increasing pressure on our environment and are failing to provide for the food for the world's vulnerable people, both in terms of agricultural yield and nutritional quality. Maximizing agricultural productivity and shifting to sustainable food systems is critical to eradicating poverty, creating income opportunities, enhancing inclusive socio-economic growth and reducing vulnerabilities across the globe.

Noteworthy is also the UNSCN participation at the *First Global Conference on Synergies between the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement*, hosted by UN DESA in Copenhagen from 1-3 April 2019. The Conference aimed to promote action around the SDGs and climate change, and deliver a set of concrete recommendations for strengthening the interlinkages between the SDGs and climate action. It served as an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on SDG 13 (climate action) ahead of in-depth review of SDG 13 by the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). On 2 April, UNSCN hosted the side-event [Sustainable diets for healthy people and healthy planet](#), providing a platform for several actors to share ideas, experiences and challenges in promoting healthy and sustainable diets as a means of contributing to the alignment of the climate and 2030 Agenda's - specifically SDG 2 and SDG 13 - and of stimulating action from stakeholders at the global, regional and country levels to maximize synergies.

Later in the year, during UNFCCC COP 25 in Madrid, in December 2019, the UNSCN was able to, once again, highlight the findings of its discussion papers and the common narrative on sustainable healthy diets at the collaborative United Nations side-event, *Strengthening Synergies, Maximizing Co-benefits*. UNSCN call upon COP 25 participants to consider the essential role of food systems in climate change and to fully take into account the need to transform food system to deliver sustainable healthy diets when discussing and agreeing on climate change mitigation strategies.

All these events provided a platform for actors to share ideas as a means of contributing to the alignment of climate and 2030 Agenda goals and of galvanizing stakeholders at global, regional and country level into action to maximize synergies. These efforts, together with the aforementioned activities in Copenhagen and Nairobi, are highly likely to result in the inclusion of food systems transformation in formal negotiations at the UNFCCC COP 26 to be held in Glasgow, UK, in November 2020.

Lastly, for UNSCN to further promote the potential of sustainable healthy diets to transform food systems and contribute to achieving all SDGs, a close collaboration was established with the [Sustainable Food Systems Programme of the One Planet Network](#). UNSCN remained an active member of the Multistakeholder Advisory Committee of the SFSP strengthening the links between sustainable production and consumption with their nutrition outcomes. It also serves on the Organizing Committee of the Third Global Conference of the SFSP to take place in Bangkok, Thailand, in November 2020.

Urban-rural linkages and nutrition

Although the multisectoral nature of nutrition is well known, how nutrition is affected by linkages across the rural–urban continuum is not. Increased attention to the impact of changes in food systems, urbanization and rural transformation has highlighted the importance of territoriality and urban governance in addressing nutrition. Nutritionists and urban planners need to better understand how urban–rural linkages shape the factors that affect nutrition and how these broader policies and programs are designed and governed.

To promote this dialogue and foster bridges, the UNSCN attended the UN-Habitat First International Forum on Urban–Rural Linkages in Songyang, China, on “rural revitalization through innovation and valorisation”, commenting on the findings of its discussion paper on [Nutrition, Urban–Rural Linkages and Integrated Territorial Development](#), prepared together with the CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health and UN-Habitat.

This paper provides an overview of nutrition and the urban–rural context and how, in general terms, this relates to integrated territorial governance and development. The discussion is then situated in the context of the global development agenda, particularly initiatives dealing with nutrition, urban settlements and urban–rural linkages. The paper explores how the Guiding Principles for Urban–Rural Linkages (URL-GP) and Framework for Action (FfA) developed by UN-Habitat relate to nutrition actions. Recognizing that the links between urban-rural linkages are not direct, but mediated by other systems and factors, and noting that experiences with applying a territorial approach to nutrition policies and programs are still limited. The paper concludes by outlining initial steps towards promoting more integrated territorial planning for nutrition, while also encouraging further thinking, initiatives and research in this direction.

The UNSCN discussion paper was officially launched during the 10th session of the World Urban Forum (WUF10) in Abu Dhabi, early 2020, with great interest by urban planners from around the world. To ensure greater accessibility to its content, the paper has been translated in all six official UN languages.

Committee on World Food Security (CFS)

Assuring policy coherence and effective advocacy for nutrition action and results requires that robust linkages are made with other relevant global platforms, notably the ***Committee on World Food Security (CFS)***. To ensure full integration of nutrition into the ***CFS***, several UNSCN Members and the Secretariat continued to serve as part of the CFS Advisory Group and as a member of most of its Technical Task Teams (CFS TTT) in 2019. UNSCN continued its active engagement in the CFS Nutrition Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) to develop the ***CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition***. The Voluntary Guidelines are intended to be a reference point that provides evidence-based guidance mainly to governments, specialized institutions and other stakeholders, on effective policies, investments and institutional arrangements that will address malnutrition in all its forms. They will be another very important guiding document for assuring UN System-wide policy coherence on nutrition. Throughout 2019 development process, the UNSCN Secretariat worked to reach consensus among members on common positions and approaches. The UNSCN helped collect and consolidate Member’s comments on the preliminary drafts submitted through e-consultation. The e-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.

During 46th session of the CFS, in October 2019, UNSCN helped to ensure UN members alignment, helped to draw attention to nutrition, and delivered a coherent message to various audiences on tackling all forms of malnutrition. Also, during the 46th session of the CFS, UNSCN partnered with others to organize and promote a number of [CFS side-events](#) reinforcing the common UN narrative around nutrition challenges, solutions and results.

- a) “Maximizing the impact of the Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit in Japan in 2020: What more can be done to transform our failing food system?” UNSCN organized this side-event in partnership with the UK Department for International Development (DFID), FAO, the Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition (GLOPAN) and the governments of the Netherlands and Japan. In its presentation, UNSCN underlined elements from the ICN2 Framework for Action, highlighting progress made and areas that still require more action in the run up towards N4G Summit.
- b) “Treasures of the oceans and inland waters – ensuring food security and nourishing nations: Gaining and sharing knowledge in the Decade of Action on Nutrition. From healthy waters to

healthy people.” During this side-event, UNSCN emphasized the potential of fish and other foods produced by aquatic food production systems as part of a sustainable healthy diet. This event was organized by UNSCN and the Global Action Network – Sustainable Food from the Oceans and Inland Waters for Food Security and Nutrition, the governments of Norway, Finland and Ireland, the Institutes of Marine Research of Ireland and Norway, WorldFish (CGIAR), the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), FAO, the World Bank’s Youth2Youth Community, the Joint Programming Initiative Healthy and Productive Seas and Oceans (JPI Oceans), the Nordic Food Policy Lab and the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers.

- c) “Investing in schools for sustainable nutrition impact: Using schools to transform food systems and promote double duty actions for improved nutrition.” This event highlighted the potential that institutional food procurement has to address food and nutritional outcomes as a tool for promoting sustainable healthy diets and food system transformation. The event was organized by UNSCN in partnership with the UN Network for SUN Secretariat, the WFP Centre of Excellence Against Hunger, FAO and the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC).

Inter-Agency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases (UNIATF).

With the same purposes of assuring UN System-wide policy coherence and advocacy on nutrition, the UNSCN became a member, since its onset in 2013, of the **UNIATF**. In 2019, UNSCN participated in the body’s twelfth and thirteenth meetings in New York (March) and Rome (October). As the convenor of the IATF’s thematic working group (TWG) on nutrition these meetings provided an opportunity to present on progress in nutrition, strengthen networks and strategize future direction of the nutrition TWG.

In 2019, the UNSCN Secretariat has worked with other TWG members to accelerate action on all forms of malnutrition by i) conducting an inventory of members work in school nutrition to enhance collaboration in work on childhood obesity, ii) piloted guidance for joint country missions to elevate the priority given to nutrition actions, and iii) established a Community of Practice on Nutrition, Human Rights and Law to foster collaboration and create a cohesive narrative on the importance of human rights based approaches and legal mechanisms to advance the nutrition agenda. Also, during the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly, the Friends of the UNIATF co-organized a side-event on “Supporting Member States to achieve the NCD-related Sustainable Development Goals targets”. Co-organizers included the United Nations Development Programme and the governments of India, Japan, the Russian Federation, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam. The UNSCN was the only speaker at the side-event addressing the need for preventing NCDs through sustainable healthy diets and breastfeeding promotion, while emphasizing the role of women. The UNSCN Brief: [**Non-communicable diseases, diets and nutrition**](#) was also used as an input to the side-event, providing overviews of various technical and policy aspects of the NCDs nutrition nexus, including a summary of how nutrition, diet and NCDs are linked, and an overview of key intervention, programme and policy actions.

UNSCN also attended and presented at regional meetings to help ensure the consistent delivery of nutrition actions and nutrition-sensitive approaches on the ground to the most in need:

- a. the World Bank-led **South Asia Food and Nutrition Security Initiative (SAFANSI)** [meeting](#) in Bangkok, Thailand, in July 2019. SAFANSI was established by the World Bank in 2010 to address the high rates of malnutrition in the region. It works as an innovative platform, piloting cross-cutting interventions and leveraging funds when pilots are successful and serving as a learning and exchange platform. UNSCN participated in discussions, underlining the urgent need to advocate for promoting sustainable healthy diets as an entry point to food systems transformation and avail of the window of opportunity provided by the Decade for Action on Nutrition. UNSCN also highlighted the importance of Food Based Dietary Guidelines for improving nutrition as well as the need for developing them with a sustainability criteria.

- b. the **Fourth Eurasian Food Security Conference**. This is a major event promoting food and nutrition security in the Eurasian region. It provides an international collaborative platform by bringing together experts from regional and international organizations, scientific and educational institutions and various governments to address regional food security concerns. UNSCN delivered a presentation on “global commitments and tools to eradicate hunger and all forms of malnutrition”, building on the 2017 UNSCN discussion paper on [Global Governance for Nutrition and the role of UNSCN](#). During the Conference, UNSCN, FAO and WHO advised on linking this series of conferences with other regional efforts, such as regional capacity building that follows up to Regional Food System Conference in Europe 2018.

Accountability to ECOSOC

In line with UNSCN’s accountability towards Member States, UNSCN 2018 Annual Progress Report to ECOSOC was submitted early 2019 as a response to the ECOSOC decision 2018/207 focusing on “*promoting the coherence and impact of the United Nations system response to nutrition problems, and to reflect on policy implications for the achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.*” This was followed by a formal presentation to the ECOSOC Coordination and Management Meeting in April 2019, in New York. Also, the UNSCN 2019 Annual Progress Report was prepared in late 2019 for submission in the spring 2020. The report detailed the efforts of UNSCN Members and Secretariat to align their work in support of the Nutrition Decade. It also describes the new developments relating to the coordination arrangements on nutrition with the ongoing merger of the UNSCN with the UN Network for SUN towards establishing UN Nutrition.

SO2 - support consistent and accountable delivery by the UN system

Clear principles and frameworks are helpful to guide the process of developing and implementing context specific local strategies. UNSCN works to support national and local actions by developing and disseminating guidelines for the aligned and coherent action by the UN system, in line with the 2030 Agenda. The work of the UNSCN Secretariat in this area is carried out in close collaboration with the UN Network for SUN / REACH Secretariat, which is mobilizing coordinated UN action at country level. It was in this context that UNSCN continued its work in 2019 in promoting and disseminating its **Guidance Note on Integration of Nutrition in the UNDAF**⁴, renamed as the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). The Guidance note helps UN Country Teams to better integrate nutrition into their planning and programming and to reflect nutrition-related risks and opportunities in their cooperation agreements. Throughout 2019 the note was distributed through the SUN networks at country level, as well as the country offices of UNSCN Members. Also, the Guidance Note served as background material and was disseminated at the capacity building workshop of UNICEF, FAO, WHO on food systems for children (Kazakhstan, April 2019). During the workshop UNSCN highlighted the need to link local and global policies based on guidance provided by the UNSDCF.

Child wasting is still a form of malnutrition that needs urgent attention. Around 50 million children under five years were affected by wasting, of which, 17 million in its severe form, in 2018. These children are

⁴ See also page 17

much more likely to die before the age of 5 because their immunity to infections is weakened by a lack of nutrients. Those who survive may go on to suffer poor growth and mental development. In many cases, their cognitive development is permanently impaired, and they perform worse in school and are less productive as adults.

In July 2019, the Principals of UNSCN Members FAO, WHO, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and UN OCHA issued a [joint statement](#) committing to put a more unified response in place to treat and prevent child wasting by launching the UN Global Plan of Action (GAP) on Wasting to underscore their commitment to global action over the next decade to stop malnutrition before it occurs and to give children the chance to reach their full potential, while ensuring that all children and women suffering from acute malnutrition receive the treatment they need. In 2019, UNSCN supported the on-going development process of the [Global Action Plan on Wasting](#)⁵, fostering discussion among Members with a view to forging a common narrative. In addition, UNSCN is a member of the [Global Nutrition Cluster](#) established as part of the humanitarian reform process. It participates in two of its workstreams: The Acute Malnutrition Global Thematic Working Group and the Reference Group on the Use of Cash and Vouchers Assistance for nutrition in humanitarian contexts.

For the Nutrition Decade to achieve longstanding results, forward thinking and awareness of the constantly evolving nutrition landscape are essential. The academic community and the technical teams of UN agencies have a crucial role to play in identifying and filling knowledge gaps. UNSCN remains fully engaged with these communities and aware of ongoing research.

Throughout 2019, UNSCN interacted with the research community to advance nutritional knowledge. UNSCN continued calling for trans-disciplinary approaches to focus on what still needs to be explored by academic/scientific research. The UNSCN coordinator participated in academic conferences and exchanged ideas with researchers from all over the world, working in various health, social protection and agriculture related disciplines.

Upon request, UNSCN secretariat co-authored several articles including, for example, the article by Branca F, Lartey A, Oenema S, Aguayo V, Stordalen G A, Richardson R et al. [Transforming the food system to fight non-communicable diseases](#), published by the British Medical Journal in 2019.

Lastly, UNSCN continued in 2019 its cross-cutting work in support of its various strategic objectives, for example, on sustainable food systems for improved nutrition (see SO1), on schools as a setting for improving nutrition and on private-sector engagement for better nutrition (see SO3).

Schools as a System to Improve School Nutrition:

Schools offer a unique opportunity to improve nutrition using a systemic, multi-sectoral approach. Social, health, economic and ethic arguments coalesce in and around schools. Looking at schools as a system to improve nutrition offers insights into what interventions to implement and combine to ensure the best possible nutrition outcomes for children in schools, their families and their communities, both now and in future. The very well received UNSCN discussion paper [Schools as a System to Improve Nutrition](#) (Sept 2017) served as a chapter in the book ***Agrobiodiversity, School Gardens and Healthy Diets: Promoting Biodiversity, Food and Sustainable Nutrition (Issues in Agricultural Biodiversity)***, published in 2019. Building on the ad hoc coalition of eight UNSCN members (FAO, IAEA, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, WHO and Bioversity International/IFPRI) and partners (including BMGF, GCNF, PCD, and WB) that teamed up to develop the 2017 discussion paper, the UNSCN is now starting to work on an inventory of school based

⁵ WHO (2020) *Global Action Plan on Child Wasting. Accelerating progress in preventing and managing child wasting and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals*. Available at: https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/nutritionlibrary/articles---call-for/draft-global-action-plan-childwasting.pdf?sfvrsn=54335d78_2

nutrition programmes and interventions with the objective of enhancing collaboration between agencies and ensuring coherence in the guiding principles for these actions.

SO3 - explore new and emerging nutrition related issues

Emerging issues are potential problems/opportunities in their earliest stage of development. They can be a possible new technology, a potential public policy issues, or a new concept or idea that, while perhaps peripheral today, could develop into a critical mainstream issue in the future. This is an essential line of work on nutrition to help anticipate movements and major future trends to build the much-needed coherent and robust approaches for tackling malnutrition challenges with sound solutions.

In 2019, UNSCN continued to explore new and emerging nutrition-related issues in close collaboration with its Members. After a consultative process with nutrition stakeholders and UNSCN Members, the following three topics were deemed worth exploring and will be the subject of further work by UNSCN in the coming years:

1. ***Nutrition in a digital world*** will be the subject of *UNSCN Nutrition 45*, UNSCN's peer-reviewed flagship annual publication in 2020. The Internet and other digital technologies have dramatically changed the world as we knew it just ten years ago. Information and data are being produced, shared, and consumed at prodigious rates, and people are connected in previously unthinkable ways. Digital economies are rapidly replacing traditional modes of production and exchange. Nutrition is no exception, with the proliferation of "food techs", "agri techs", "edu techs", "fin techs" and even "gov techs" covering a broad spectrum of agriculture-, food systems- and nutrition-related activities. The potential benefits may be vast, and so may be the dangers. We are only now starting to grasp the scale of change this new digital world is bringing. The benefit-risk duality can be exemplified with digital influence in food consumption. On one hand, educational games and web- or media-based digital nutrition education tools have shown potential to improve nutrition literacy and encourage healthier eating practices. On the other, digital marketing is shaping a digital food environment that promotes overconsumption of foods high in salt, sugar, unhealthy fats and additives, which is very challenging to address. The reach and impacts of the digital world in nutrition, however, go far beyond demand side and food consumption issues. Digital processes and technologies are reshaping almost every industry and human activity, and the implications of such changes for health and nutrition are not yet sufficiently investigated, let alone understood. Increasing digital competence, overcoming the digital divide generated by inequalities, as well as the impacts of automation on the job market, have become major development challenges. The digital world potentially affects not only underlying and immediate causes of malnutrition in all its forms, but also its root causes, and our ability to address them. Through its forthcoming publication, the UNSCN aims at better documenting and sharing experiences, enhancing knowledge and promoting the debate on potential positive and adverse impacts of innovative digital technologies in people's nutrition.
2. ***Nutrition action within new development paradigms***. Mainstream policies and financial approaches to development have been failing to address inequalities in a world where the central development objective remains economic growth, under the false assumption that increased productivity will lead to better social outcomes. Growth quality has become a central issue here. Despite growing faster, developing countries see slower improvements in well-being outcomes for the same rate of economic growth than of early industrializers.⁶ This dominant paradigm, under which most economic development processes still operate, is clearly incompatible and insufficient

⁶ https://www.oecd.org/dev/Overview_EN_web.pdf

to face world challenges. In an attempt to shift this development paradigm, the world adopted the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda, proposing profound changes in model, modality, and perception of development for a better long-term future for humanity, placing human rights, poverty reduction, health, nutrition, education, and environmental protection at the core of the development narrative and derived actions.

Entering the last decade of the 2030 Agenda there is a need to further the paradigm shift, sustainably changing the perception of how things should be done, made, and thought about and implementing bold, transformative, and disruptive development approaches and pathways. New development approaches need to be strategized within a context of new challenges, such as automation and climate change. Interesting examples include the circular economy, degrowth theories, sharing economies, innovative business models and urban-rural linkages for sustainable production and the introduction of new digital technologies that are radically altering the production and the service delivery processes. New thinking on nutrition actions and food systems transformation, not only on what to do but on how to do it, is urgently required that can contribute to further the development paradigm shift and achieving the SDGs, granting visibility and addressing the needs of those who have been left behind. The UNSCN shall examine new and innovative ways of delivering direct nutrition actions and nutrition related approaches that are being designed and implemented within new development paradigms. It shall also look at linkages between nutrition, economic development and environmental protection that are being originated by these new ways of working. This thinking builds on earlier UNSCN work of how nutrition fits into the 2030 Agenda and how nutrition can work as a catalyst to achieve all 17 SDGs.

3. ***Financial investment in nutrition – what modalities are being used?*** A substantial increase in the different financial investment modalities in direct nutrition actions and nutrition sensitive approaches is urgently needed to fill the funding gap, especially in agriculture and food systems. It includes financial engagements of governments expressed by national budgets, of actors with a non-profit focus, such as private foundations and civil society organizations, and of the private sector. The financial engagements of the private sector take several forms such as grants, reimbursable grants, debt instruments, equity, guarantees, and other modalities, such as innovative finance and more recently impact investing.⁷ Taking a practical look at the current landscape of financial investments in nutrition actions and predicting future trends is key for supporting Member States in their efforts to mobilize resources. UNSCN shall work to enhance the collective understanding of such modalities, terminologies and mechanisms that will facilitate the identification of opportunities as well as gaps and challenges for pursuing new financial investments to improve nutrition.

Private-sector engagement for better nutrition results:

Also under SO3, in 2019, the UNSCN continue its work on private-sector engagement for nutrition.

Tackling all forms of malnutrition while protecting the planet is first and foremost the responsibility of national governments, which must provide leadership, set priorities, pool capacity and resources from multiple actors, provide public services and enforce national laws. Living up to this responsibility requires decisive engagement with all key stakeholders, including the private sector.

The private sector is the backbone of food systems and has been producing and distributing the foods and other essential goods people need. However, some private-sector actors are still engaged in practices that may cause harm to nutrition and the environment.

To best assist governments in carrying out their tasks, it is important that UNSCN Members identify ways to support the private sector in shaping more sustainable food systems that deliver sustainable healthy diets. UNSCN Members should promote constructive dialogue and build engaging policy environments

⁷ <http://www.oecd.org/dac/peer-reviews/Inventory-1-Private-Sector-Engagement-Terminology-and-Typology.pdf>

that allow governments to work closely with the private sector to improve nutrition, manage conflicts of interest and enhance transparency and accountability.

To this end, in late 2018, UNSCN shared a questionnaire with Member agencies to identify their reasons and methods of engagement with the private sector, as well as the safeguards they use to avoid and manage potential conflicts of interest. This work continued in 2019, with interviews aimed at digging deeper into agencies' experience and this should lead to an inventory of policies, guidelines, norms and procedures for due diligence, as well as examples of best practice. The inventory will be made available to national governments, private-sector actors and other interested parties.

New discussion papers in the pipeline

Lastly, the need to build a robust narrative for healthy sustainable diets that does not allow for the production of opposite conclusions or recommendations for action under change of assumption or environment, led to the identification of two important topics for further work in the form of discussion papers in 2020. The development of these papers will greatly benefit from the links forged by UNSCN between various development actors in 2019.

- The role of aquatic food production systems in improving nutrition.
- The role of livestock production and consumption in sustainable healthy diets.

SO4 – promote knowledge sharing across the UN system and beyond

UNSCN's knowledge products present the collective effort and views of its Members and partners and support the United Nations goal of ***delivering as one*** on nutrition. The products are developed with input from experts in different spheres of knowledge, both within and outside UNSCN's member agencies. This creates strong interdisciplinary connections and opens the door to intersectoral collaboration.

In 2019, UNSCN continued to develop its products as a means of forging such ties and synergies to enhance impact. With so many nutrition-related agendas being pursued by myriad state and non-state actors at the international, national and sub-national levels, UNSCN maintained its support for time-bound online communities of practice (CoP) to advance analysis and discussion, drawing on their expertise and experience.

UNSCN Communities of Practice

As part of its knowledge sharing role, UNSCN has continued to host and support the following [online communities of practice](#) throughout 2019.

1. ***Accelerated Reduction Effort on Anaemia (AREA) Community of Practice:*** Moderation of the group in 2019 was conducted by WHO. The CoP membership continued to grow from 914 members from 76 countries in 2018 to 1012 in 2019. Twitter membership also grew from ~220 to 336. In 2019, 40 communications took place on a variety of topics and three well-attended webinars (approx. attendees and 100+ registrations) were organized on the following topics:
 - Anaemia prevention programmes for women: an opportunity for double duty actions
 - Universal Health Coverage: What it means for anaemia reduction programmes.
 - Simultaneous implementation of interventions to prevent anaemia. Are there any risks?
2. ***The Agriculture-Nutrition Community of Practice (Ag2Nut):*** In 2019, the Agriculture-Nutrition (Ag2Nut) Community of Practice continued to grow, reaching an active membership of over 7200

people from 128 countries (adding over 900 members and 4 countries since 2018). The Ag2Nut Global Community is co-led by Anna Herforth, Emily Ruppert, and Cecilia Gonzalez, who also support the formation of subcommunities. To date, three subcommunities have formed for people working in Ethiopia, Nigeria and Ghana, while one for South Asia is in its beginning stages. The oldest and most active subcommunity is Ag2Nut Ethiopia, led by Fikadu Reta. In its fourth year, the Ag2Nut-Ethiopia Subgroup has reached 3000 members in 2019, from 39 countries. Members shared 225 posts in the Ag2Nut Global Community, including job postings, new publications, events and information requests. The library displays and makes available very valuable knowledge products such as manuals, online training courses, policy briefs, academic papers and reviews, among others. An [Ag2Nut LinkedIn Group](#) was created by the co-leads in 2019 for members to post their interest and availability to work or collaborate on Ag2Nut related jobs, consultancies, projects, etc. Currently 347 professionals participate in the group.

Since June 2018, Ag2Nut has partnered with the [ANH Academy](#) to co-host Webinars. Previous Ag2Nut webinars hosted by SPRING are still [available on their website](#), and those hosted by the ANH Academy are [available on their events page](#) by date. In 2019 Ag2Nut webinars focused on:

- **Feb 27:** [EAT-Lancet Commission on Food, Planet, and Health](#) (251 attended)
- **Mar 13:** [Household Water Security Scale](#) (42 attended)
- **May 21:** [Development of Food-Based Dietary Guidelines in Ethiopia, and Global Review of FBDG](#) (122 attended)
- **Jun 5:** [Ag2Nut Call: India, ANH Academy, and Connecting with members](#) (20 attended)
- **Dec 13:** [Economic Evaluation of Agriculture-Nutrition Programs](#) (72 attended)

3. Nutrition and Noncommunicable Chronic Diseases – e-discussion Forum (NutNCD): In 2019, NutNCD reached 1008 members from 98 countries and territories, as mainly an information sharing platform. In 2019, 20 communications took place on a variety of topics: updates on meetings on NCDs, the publication of major reports, commissions and papers, sharing of useful tools, announcements of NCD-related webinars, and announcements of key dates and events such as global meetings and world breastfeeding week.

4. The Nutrition and Climate Change eGroup (NutCC): The Nutrition and Climate change eGroup is an ad hoc online discussion forum, created with the aim of bringing a nutrition lens into climate change issues and increasing the participation of interested sectors to discuss how this can be achieved and what the priorities are. This E-group also identifies opportunities for the nutrition agenda and weaknesses that hinder the participation of nutrition in such debates. It also aims to influence the agendas of the research community and the traditional nutrition donors. In 2019, NutCC achieved 920 members from 90 countries, a slight increase in comparison with 2018. During 2019 the NutCC has provided a forum to share information and discuss key reports related to climate-resilient sustainable food systems and diets, including the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on *Climate, Land and Food Security*, the IPCC Report on *Climate and Oceans*, the *EAT-Lancet Commission on Food, Planet, Health* and the *Lancet Commission on the Syndemic: Obesity, Undernutrition, Climate Change*. Members of the NutCC eGroup co-organized several events around the UN Climate Week in NY and the COP25, including a [Luncheon Dialogue on the Role of Plant-based Diets in Addressing the Climate Crisis](#), an official event at the UNFCCC COP25 on [Transformative Climate-Resilient Pathways for Sustainable and Healthy Food Systems and Diets](#) and a panel discussion and a working session on [Transformative pathways for sustainable and healthy food systems and diets at the WHO Global Climate and Health Summit](#) around the COP25 in Madrid.

Going forward, UNSCN and its evolved entity UN Nutrition, will continue to facilitate these actions in 2020 and beyond, including considering the creation of additional online communities of practice focused on the intersection between nutrition, human rights and law, school nutrition, among others.

UNSCN Nutrition series

The UNSCN flagship peer-reviewed publication *UNSCN News* was renamed ***UNSCN Nutrition*** in 2019. *UNSCN Nutrition* is a periodic thematic review of developments on relevant and/or emerging nutrition issues of international interest. UNSCN receives and collects contributions from a variety of academic sources as well as from the international nutrition community of practice through selected publications of authors from all stakeholder groups: government, academics, civil society, and the private sector. In this way, UNSCN Nutrition aims to serve as a knowledge sharing channel across the entire development community, highlighting recent developments with relevance for policy and programme and includes updates on UNSCN Members' activities. Many developing country researchers and programme managers have found the UNSCN Nutrition very useful, for its focus on policy and programme implications, which makes the UNSCN Nutrition unique compared to other research-oriented peer reviewed nutrition publications.

The theme of the 2019 edition was *Food environments: Where people meet the food system* and it explored the contexts in which consumers engage with the food system to make their decisions about acquiring, preparing and consuming food, and the impact of such food environment on their final dietary choices. The food environment will influence the consumers' dietary habits on the long-term and thus their nutritional and health status. *Food environments* is a new concept. Researchers have not yet reached a unique agreed-upon definition, but they tend to converge towards a combination of external and personal factors eventually influencing people's food choices, attitudes and habits. While food availability, prices, vendors, product properties, marketing and regulation design the food environment externally, a food environment also depends on personal aspects such as geographical access, affordability, convenience and desirability of food for the consumer. The [UNSCN Nutrition 44](#)⁸ highlighted numerous experiences across the food system, enhancing knowledge and promoting the debate on the need for transformative approaches to the food system to generate healthier food environments.

UNSCN Discussion papers

UNSCN also published other knowledge products, including the aforementioned discussion papers on [Water and Nutrition](#) and [Urban–Rural Linkages for Nutrition](#). To ensure the greatest level of engagement, UNSCN translates its discussion papers into all six official UN languages. Contributions to online discussions are welcome in this manner as well.

UNSCN communication efforts

Communication is the vehicle through which nutrition messages can reach wider audiences creating awareness, imparting knowledge, projecting a vision, shaping attitudes, and stimulating action. With the collection of UNSCN products in place, UNSCN outreach continued throughout 2019 according to the objectives set in the *UNSCN Communication Strategy 2018/2019*. Consequently, UNSCN products and news of events regularly appeared in the news briefs of other organizations, including: IFPRI Compact, 10 YFP SFSP, IISD SDG Knowledge Hub, UN Special Rapporteur Newsletter, SDG2 Hub, the SUN Movement as well as UNSCN Members. This outreach resulted in an increased awareness, uptake and use of UNSCN knowledge products.

⁸ UNSCN (2019) *UNSCN Nutrition 44 – Food environments: Where people meet the food system*. Available at: <https://www.unscn.org/uploads/web/news/UNSCN-Nutrition44-WEB-21aug.pdf>

The UNSCN audience continued to grow in 2019: 500+ individuals from all over the world registered to UNSCN e-newsletters and e-alerts. A total of 16 were disseminated and read by more than 5'000 individuals in 2019, with the total number of readers exceeding 5,000 on 31st December 2019; Twitter reached 8'000 followers by Dec 2019, an almost 15% increase from the previous year; it now has 3'354 followers of its Facebook page; and 186 followers on LinkedIn. Notable in 2019 was the amount of information forwarded by UNSCN subscribers to other networks: for example, in case of the launch of the 44th edition of UNSCN Nutrition, original subscribers forwarded the communication to more than 4'000 other people from their contact list.

In 2019, regular exchanges of information by UNSCN Members were organised and jointly held with the UN Network for SUN Secretariat. This included one face-to-face meeting in 2019 (17-18 September) and four well-attended teleconferences (23 January; 20 March; 15 May; 24 July). In addition, calls and face to face meetings were organized to specifically discuss the merger: with the agencies Deputies (10 November) and with the Steering Committee members (July and October).

III. STRENGTHENED COORDINATION ARRANGEMENTS FOR NUTRITION

In April 2016, the United Nations Assembly's proclamation of the Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025) presented stakeholders with a unique opportunity to strengthen combined efforts to eradicate global hunger and tackle all forms of malnutrition and help to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. For people and planet, 2020 will be a crucial milestone: the start of a 10-year countdown to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With just 10 years to achieve these goals, in September 2019, the Secretary-General called on all sectors of society to mobilize for a Decade of Action and accelerate efforts on all levels for the achievements of the SDGs. There needs to be a concerted drive to accelerate efforts if all of the goals are to be achieved. Furthering UN System-wide coordination efforts and strengthening policy coherence are more important than ever.

To respond to the Secretary-General's call and better capitalize on the opportunity presented by the Decade of Action on Nutrition, coordination must become more robust, coherent and streamlined.

The [Scaling Up Nutrition \(SUN\) Movement](#) was established in 2010 to propose new ways of working collaboratively to end malnutrition in all its forms. It convenes 61 countries, governments, civil-society organizations, businesses, donors, researchers and United Nations agencies in a joint effort to scale up nutrition actions and nutrition-sensitive approaches.

In June 2013, the Principals of FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) established the [United Nations Network for SUN \(UN Network\)](#) as an inter-agency mechanism for country-level coordination, primarily to support countries that had joined the SUN Movement. All five core agencies of the UN Network are members of UNSCN and sit on the UNSCN Steering Committee.

Consequently, within the UN System, two UN bodies currently work to coordinate and harmonize nutrition actions and policies: UNSCN and the UN Network. UNSCN mainly works at global level to promote global policy and advocacy coherence, while the UN Network works at country level to bring greater coherence to national nutrition agendas.

In line with the ambitions of United Nations System Reform and to maximize efficiency and effectiveness, the Deputy Chief Executives of FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO have proposed the merger of UNSCN and the UN Network to support, consolidate and boost UN System-wide coordination at global and country level, in support of Member States efforts to improve the nutritional situation of their people.

The merger will forge an empowered arrangement for more efficient and effective harmonization of United Nations efforts on nutrition. It will underpin and energize the work now undertaken by UNSCN to link nutrition with United Nations and non-United Nations coordination mechanisms for food security, water, health, climate change, environmental protection and other global and national development challenges. It will help to translate global policies into national strategies, and vice versa, ensuring that on-the-ground realities inform global policy.

Terms of reference have been drafted for this reinforced mechanism, which will eradicate fragmentation, increase harmonization and give coherent and cohesive support to Member States to effect greater change for all. It will act as a forum for United Nations agencies, programmes and funds to leverage their collective strengths, build synergies, identify efficiencies and complementarities and support Member States and partners in delivering results for nutrition.

The proposed functions of the combined mechanism build and expand on existing ones, to better serve countries in implementing their commitments to the Decade of Action on Nutrition and the SDGs. They are fully in line with ECOSOC's original mandate to UNSCN and include: (1) aligned advocacy and policy coherence for nutrition, (2) identifying and coordinating strategic and emerging issues around nutrition; (3) promoting knowledge management and innovation; and (4) translating global-level guidance into country-level actions, guidelines and impact.

Actions conducted jointly by the UNSCN and UN Network Secretariats

To advance the merger, UNSCN and the UN Network intensified their collaboration in 2019. This has aided the identification of country needs to ensure that knowledge products respond accordingly. It has also expanded the reach of these products.

The UNSCN and UN Network Secretariats undertook joint communications by expanding UNSCN newsletters and e-alerts to include the UN Network. This has ensured a more coherent United Nations voice on nutrition. UNSCN publications were disseminated to stimulate debate and build capacity. UNSCN's [Guidance Note on Integration of Nutrition in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework: A Guidance Note for United Nations Country Teams](#) (now the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework) was distributed and promoted throughout the UN Network. A joint workplan for 2020 was developed to unite the capacities of the two entities.

UN Nutrition

ECOSOC's mandate to UNSCN in 1977 is, thus, more relevant than ever. It has been proposed that the merged coordination mechanism supersedes the UNSCN and UN Network and be called **UN Nutrition**. Terms of reference have been submitted to the agencies' Principals for their approval.

UNSCN and the UN Network will work even more closely in 2020 and steadily transition into UN Nutrition, a more effective nutrition coordination mechanism with global and country reach. With a stronger coordination mechanism from 2020, there will be far greater alignment of nutrition policy and consistency of delivery across the United Nations System in response to country needs. The global nutrition community will be even better prepared to seize the opportunities generated by the Decade of Action and other development processes to combat malnutrition in all its forms. This includes the [Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit 2020](#) to be hosted by the Government of Japan in tandem with the 2020 Olympic Games, as well as the 2021 Food Systems Summit called by the United Nations Secretary-General.

IV. UNSCN'S FUNCTIONING

Membership

Tackling malnutrition requires a holistic and comprehensive approach that can only be achieved by forging links between nutrition and the numerous other development challenges. Consequently, UNSCN's membership comprise, in 2019, fourteen United Nations System entities, one associate member and two observers, intent on fostering such ties:

1. The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO),
2. the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA),
3. the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD),
4. the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food,
5. the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB),
6. the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA),
7. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA),
8. UN Environment,
9. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR),
10. the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF),
11. the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO),
12. UN Women,
13. the World Food Programme (WFP),
14. the World Health Organization (WHO)
15. and CGIAR (formerly the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research) through the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT (associate member).
16. The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) Secretariat (observer)
17. the UN Network for Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN)/REACH Secretariat (observer).

The increase in collaboration with other UN agencies, such as UNDP and UNESCO, was also noted in 2019, demonstrating the multi-disciplinary nature of nutrition and the growing interest of UN agencies in including nutrition in their policies, approaches and programming. UNSCN members, associates and interested partners build on their mandates and comparative advantages and work jointly to ensure maximum impact while avoiding duplication of efforts. The technical teams of the member agencies work closely with the UNSCN's Secretariat to ensure the highest quality standards possible of UNSCN products.

UNSCN Trust Fund and Budget 2019

In 2019, financial contributions were committed by FAO, IAEA, IFAD, WFP, UNDESA and UN Women.

UNSCN Secretariat

The Secretariat team consisted of a coordinator, an administrative assistant, two full-time and one part-time consultants in 2019. It was also aided by two interns whose main tasks were archiving, helping with the preparation and reporting from meetings, and undertaking desk reviews. Additional consultants were commissioned to draft, edit, translate and design discussion papers and assist with the maintenance of the UNSCN website.

With only five years in which to achieve the World Health Assembly targets to improve maternal, infant and young child nutrition⁹ and with a pressing need to transform the food system to enhance access to sustainable healthy diets, the mid-term review of the Decade will engage all stakeholders in pinpointing the additional efforts required. It will promote new ways of working together and the establishment of new action networks. It will forge further agreements and SMART commitments by governments and other stakeholders to address all forms of malnutrition, leaving no one behind.

UNSCN and its evolving entity UN Nutrition stand ready to support the review process heading for a very successful Decade's second half, for meeting the Sustainable Development Goals.



⁹ <https://www.who.int/nutrition/global-target-2025/en/>