

United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025)

Report by the Director-General

1. This report provides an overview of the implementation of the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025), which was proclaimed in United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/259 of April 2016, based on the outcome of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) (see resolution WHA68.19 of May 2015). The United Nations Secretary-General issued a third progress report on the Decade on 12 April 2022.¹

PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING GLOBAL NUTRITION TARGETS

2. The Decade aims to achieve the global nutrition and diet-related noncommunicable disease targets established by the Health Assembly in 2012 (see resolution WHA65.6) and 2013 (resolution WHA66.10) and contributes to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. These Health Assembly targets cover child wasting, stunting and overweight; anaemia (women aged 15 to 49); low birth weight; exclusive breastfeeding; halting the rise in diabetes and obesity; and reducing the intake of salt/sodium.

3. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, other health emergencies – together with the disruption of the food supply caused by intensified conflicts and climate change – impede progress towards ending hunger and malnutrition in all its forms and achieving the health-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals.

4. Adult obesity continues to rise worldwide. More than 1.9 billion adults are affected by overweight or obesity. Nearly 3.1 billion people could not afford a healthy diet in 2020. At the same time, up to 222 million people in 53 countries or territories are expected to face acute food insecurity or worse conditions, with malnutrition remaining at critical levels.

¹ Implementation of the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025): report of the Secretary-General. New York: United Nations; 2022 (<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3969161?ln=en>, accessed 29 November 2022).

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ROME DECLARATION COMMITMENTS

5. **National strategies that include nutrition-specific goals and objectives** are found in most countries, covering for example wasting (111 Member States); stunting (117); child overweight (137); anaemia in women (106); low birth weight (125); and exclusive breastfeeding (130).¹

(a) Sustainable, resilient food systems for healthy diets

6. In 2022, the Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance, which was established by the United Nations Secretary-General, provided an analysis of the current three-dimensional crisis in order to guide a coordinated global response to the present disruptions in food systems while sustaining the transition to sustainable production. WHO contributes to the Food Workstream Working Group, which advocates for a multisectoral approach, including health, in addressing the food crisis.

7. The year 2021 was catalytic for food systems transformation towards more equitable and sustainable food systems that deliver healthy diets and improved nutrition. In February, the Committee on World Food Security endorsed its Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition, which support countries in operationalizing the ICN2 recommendations. In September, the Secretary-General convened the United Nations Food Systems Summit, for which WHO served as United Nations anchor agency for action track 2 (shifting to sustainable consumption patterns, promoting and creating demand for sustainable healthy diets, reducing waste). In December, the Government of Japan convened the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit, at which WHO led the Nutrition in Universal Health Coverage Working Group, and which had a focus on food systems for healthy diets.

8. In this context, WHO advocated for “food systems for health” supported by a menu of priority policy actions, and a global narrative to guide policy for better human, ecosystem and animal health and well-being.² Although more than 90 countries already have policies to fortify grains with iron and/or folic acid – and more than 120 countries mandate salt iodization – the coverage, quality, delivery and capacity for enforcement of these policies remain challenging.

9. In addition, the One Health High-Level Expert Panel for advancing the interconnected human, animal and environmental health agenda was launched and WHO Member States approved the new WHO global strategy for food safety 2022–2030: towards stronger food safety systems and global cooperation, which supports countries in building forward-looking food safety systems.

10. WHO also aimed to advance the recommendations of the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26) on climate change and health, advocating for greater awareness of the bidirectional relationship between nutrition and climate action, as well as the incorporation of nutrition actions for climate change adaptation and mitigation into nationally determined contributions in preparation for twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties (COP27). At COP27 WHO supported the launch of a nutrition initiative (I-CAN) by the Egyptian Government.

¹ For more information, see the Global database on the Implementation of Nutrition Action (GINA) (<https://extranet.who.int/nutrition/gina/en>, accessed 29 November 2022).

² For more information, see the Food Systems for Health website (<https://www.who.int/initiatives/food-systems-for-health>, accessed 29 November 2022); see also: Food systems delivering better health: executive summary. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2021 (www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240031814, accessed 29 November 2022).

(b) Aligned health systems providing universal coverage of essential nutrition actions

11. To advance towards the global target on wasting, the Global Action Plan for Child Wasting presents a framework to accelerate progress in preventing and managing child wasting and roadmaps of 23 frontrunner countries.¹ A call for multisystem priority actions in humanitarian contexts with high food insecurity and malnutrition is being developed by the five partner agencies covering 15 countries including in the Horn of Africa.

12. In 2022, to advance the prevention and management of obesity over the life course, the Health Assembly adopted the recommendations for the prevention and management of obesity over the life course and noted the obesity action acceleration plan,² which had been requested by Member States during the discussions of the Executive Board at its 150th session,³ with the aim of accelerating work to consolidate and prioritize country-level action against the obesity epidemic through coherent and harmonized efforts across the three levels of the Organization and within the broader ecosystem of support. To date, 24 countries across the WHO regions have already committed to advance the acceleration plan.

(c) Social protection and nutrition education

13. About 4.1 billion people lacked social protection in 2020. The Global Crisis Response Group recommendations for mitigating the impacts of the current crisis include the recommendation that social protection systems be widened and strengthened for urgent use, with special attention to the nutritional needs of the vulnerable and of women and children.

14. At the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit, 44 national governments and 66 other stakeholders committed to nutrition policy action, including equity and social protection policies, and called for a system-wide approach across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, including programming and financing. In addition, 14 national governments committed to strengthening routine nutrition information systems (food composition databases, nutrition indicators platforms, nutrition in health information systems, nutrition surveillance) for better decision-making and building local capacities.⁴

(d) Trade and investment for improved nutrition

15. In view of the increased recognition of the need for coherence between trade policies and nutrition action, the 2021 Global Dialogue on Trade addressed how the multilateral trading system can contribute to achieving global food security and good nutrition, while addressing the challenges of climate change and environmental sustainability. This was followed by the WTO Trade Dialogues on Food,⁵ which further explored the nutrition and international trade nexus.

¹ For more information, see the country road maps on the Global Action Plan for Child Wasting website (www.childwasting.org/the-gap-framework, accessed 29 November 2022).

² See documents A75/10 Rev.1 and A75/10 Add.6 and decision WHA75(11).

³ See document EB150/2020/REC/2, summary records of the sixth meeting, section 2, seventh meeting, and eighth meeting, section 1.

⁴ Tokyo Compact on Global Nutrition for Growth. Annex: Commitments. Tokyo: Nutrition for Growth Summit; 2021 (www.mofa.go.jp/files/100275456.pdf, accessed 29 November 2022); see also the Global Nutrition Report website (<https://globalnutritionreport.org/resources/naf/tracker/>, accessed 29 November 2022).

⁵ For more information on the Trade Dialogues on Food, see the WTO website (www.wto.org/english/res_e/reser_e/tradedialogonfood_e.htm, accessed 29 November 2022).

16. The nutrition financing gap was addressed during the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit, at which donor governments and donor organizations committed new nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive financing of about US\$ 27 billion to tackle malnutrition. Also, 10 donor governments made financial commitments of more than US\$ 15 billion for nutrition-related assistance through bilateral and multilateral assistance and for the development of nutrition policies and indicators.¹ In addition, four governments committed to increase national budget allocations to nutrition.

(e) Safe and supportive environments for nutrition at all ages

17. The importance of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment for the enjoyment of all human rights was affirmed by United Nations General Assembly resolution 76/300, which was co-sponsored by over 100 Member States.

18. The vast majority of WHO Member States (186) promote supportive environments for healthy diets in their national nutrition policies and strategies, aiming to reduce consumption of fats (117 Member States), salt/sodium (147) or sugars (107). Policies seeking to change the food environment through nutrition-labelling, marketing restrictions, fiscal policies or reformulation (169 Member States) are less common than population information policies based on counselling or media campaigns (185).²

19. According to a WHO-led analysis of 104 United Nations Food Systems Summit national food system transformation pathways in February 2022, the most frequent nutrition actions included in such national pathways are awareness-raising (83 Member States), food safety (74) and healthy public procurement (68). Creating supportive environments that address the accessibility and affordability of foods high in unhealthy fats, sugars and salt through action such as nutrition labelling (23), product reformulation (15), marketing restrictions (20), fiscal policies (21) or managing conflicts of interest (3), were less commonly included.³

(f) Strengthened governance and accountability for nutrition

20. The global governance commitments for nutrition progressed. In the follow-up of ICN2 recommendation 7, UN Nutrition was established in 2020 by merging the United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition and the UN Network for the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement to become a strong United Nations inter-agency coordination and collaboration mechanism for nutrition at both global and country levels.⁴

21. Acknowledging the need for transparent and accountable governance processes conducive to the participation of all stakeholders and multi-stakeholder partnerships for nutrition, a road map for implementing the WHO's draft approach to preventing and managing conflicts of interest in country-level nutrition programmes for the Americas was launched in November 2021.

¹ Tokyo Compact on Global Nutrition for Growth. Annex: Commitments. Tokyo: Nutrition for Growth Summit; 2021 (www.mofa.go.jp/files/100275456.pdf, accessed 29 November 2022).

² For more information, see the Global database on the Implementation of Nutrition Action (GINA) website (<https://extranet.who.int/nutrition/gina/en>, accessed 29 November 2022).

³ United Nations Nutrition Journal, <https://www.fao.org/3/cc2805en/cc2805en.pdf>.

⁴ See the letter from the United Nations Secretary-General to all members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination; 4 December 2021 (www.unnutrition.org/wp-content/uploads/2020-12-04-SG-letter-to-CEB-on-UN-Nutrition-EOSG-2020-065261.pdf, accessed 29 November 2022).

22. Accountability to nutrition has been strengthened through continuous updating of statistics such as the annual global estimates for child stunting, overweight and wasting, the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World reports for 2021 and 2022 bringing together global data on hunger and malnutrition; and the Global Nutrition Report providing a platform for assessing and tracking the nutrition financing landscape and the Nutrition for Growth commitments.

Global initiatives

23. Commitments on ICN2 recommendations made through the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit, United Nations Food Systems Summit or other platforms successfully brought together different stakeholders, including non-State actors, around nutrition to contribute towards achieving the aims of the Decade and the Sustainable Development Goals. The United Nations Food Systems Summit reported 234 commitments on food systems transformation¹ from different stakeholders. Other outcomes include more than 100 national food system transformation pathways and about 2000 game-changing solutions. The Secretary-General committed the United Nations system to jointly lead a coordination hub to support follow-up of the outcomes. WHO supports the hub's activities and co-chairs, together with UNEP, a renewed United Nations Food Systems Task Force for a strategic coordinated engagement in follow-up activities.

24. At the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit, national governments and various stakeholders reaffirmed their commitment to the Decade and to driving greater action on nutrition. Overall, 396 new nutrition commitments were made by a total of 181 stakeholders covering 78 countries across the thematic areas of health (67%), food (63%), resilience (41%), accountability (27%) and financing (27%). This includes 224 commitments to address all forms of malnutrition from 80 government departments/ministries in 66 countries.²

25. The African Union declared 2022 as the Year of Nutrition: Strengthening Resilience in Nutrition and Food Security on the African Continent, which is anchored on continental frameworks, including the African Regional Nutrition Strategy, which calls on African States to implement multisectoral nutrition action plans, budgets and expenditure tracking systems for the effective implementation and monitoring of nutrition interventions.³

¹ For more information, see the commitments registry on the Food Systems Summit 2021 website (<https://foodsystems.community/commitment-registry/>, accessed 29 November 2022).

² Tokyo Compact on Global Nutrition for Growth. Annex: Commitments. Tokyo: Nutrition for Growth Summit; 2021 (www.mofa.go.jp/files/100275456.pdf, accessed 29 November 2022).

³ For more information, see the African Union website (<https://au.int/en/theme/2022/year-nutrition>, accessed 29 November 2022).

CONTRIBUTIONS BY DIFFERENT ACTORS

26. **Member States.** Country-led action networks – both global and regional – continued to provide mutual support to accelerate progress through knowledge exchange on policies and legislation.¹ The concept of the Decade’s country-led action networks is mirrored in the new coalitions under the United Nations Food Systems Summit, which are designed to act as support networks for the implementation of countries’ food system transformation pathways. Examples include:

- the Coalition of Action on Healthy Diets from Sustainable Food Systems for Children and All, launched in May 2022, brings together 16 Member States, the European Commission and other stakeholders.²
- the School Meals Coalition, launched in November 2021, brings together governments and a wide range of partners and includes a peer-to-peer community of best practice, led by Germany and created under the Decade.³

27. **Entities in the United Nations system** have contributed to the Decade⁴ in accordance with their respective mandates. These include, among others, contributions to advance the nutrition agenda made by:

- FAO
- WHO
- the International Fund for Agricultural Development
- UNICEF
- WFP
- UN Nutrition
- Committee on World Food Security.

PROPOSED WAY FORWARD

28. In conclusion, in the face of existing setbacks, there is very positive momentum and urgency for accelerated efforts towards the global nutrition targets.

¹ See document EB148/7, Annex 3.

² For more information, see the website of the Coalition of Action on Healthy Diets from Sustainable Food Systems for Children and All (<https://www.who.int/initiatives/food-systems-for-health/the-coalition-of-action-on-healthy-diets-from-sustainable-food-systems-for-children-and-all>, accessed 29 November 2022).

³ For more information, see the School Meals Coalition website (<https://schoolmealscoalition.org/>, accessed 29 November 2022).

⁴ Implementation of the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025): report of the Secretary-General. New York: United Nations; 2022 (<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3969161?ln=en>, accessed 29 November 2022).

29. Possible actions by the Secretariat and Member States include the following.

Secretariat actions

- (a) continue supporting Member States to develop and implement national plans to achieve the global nutrition targets;
- (b) strengthen needed evidence and guidance, including by supporting Member States to conduct analysis of the impacts of trade on national nutrition situations;
- (c) advance support to address nutrition challenges in the context of climate change, through advocacy, normative guidance and technical support;
- (d) strengthen United Nations inter-agency coordination mechanisms, at the request of Member States, in order to be better able to support the delivery of nutrition action, including the implementation of national food system pathways; and
- (e) in collaboration with FAO, prepare and convene open and inclusive dialogues towards the end of the Decade, in 2025, for reflection on global progress and challenges encountered and identification of the potential way forward.

Member States actions

- (a) honour their food and nutrition commitments, both programmatic and financial, with a focus on concrete action and effective use of existing policy guidance for long-term sustainable impacts, leaving no one behind;
- (b) accelerate efforts, across the six action areas of the Decade's work programme, to address all forms of malnutrition holistically through a whole-of-government approach in order to increase coherence, efficiency and impacts, including for a sustainable response to the current crises; and
- (c) strengthen "food systems for health" policy action at the country level and integrate nutrition and food systems actions in nationally determined contributions in order to realize the dual benefits of actions for both people and the environment. The 2023 COP28 could further facilitate these discussions in plenary sessions.

ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

30. The Executive Board is invited to note the report and provide guidance to the Secretariat on the proposed way forward, paying particular attention to the list of actions for the Secretariat and Member States in order to honour their commitments made at the ICN2 and accelerate efforts towards achieving the global targets. In particular, the Secretariat would appreciate guidance on:

- (a) the proposed Secretariat actions outlined in paragraph 29(a) to (e) above;
- (b) the format of the dialogues at the end of the Decade and the way forward for the Decade;
- (c) the proposed actions for Member States outlined in paragraph 29(a) to (c) above.

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