



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

# HEALTHY FOOD ENVIRONMENT CHECKLIST

2022 REPORT



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## Background

The Vision and Strategy for the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations' (FAO) work in nutrition sets out an implementation plan which outlines the enabling factors that FAO will develop in order to deliver on its mission for nutrition. One of these factors is to enable healthy diets for its personnel and visitors throughout its offices worldwide. This action is aligned with FAO's larger vision for nutrition, which is a "world where all people are eating healthy diets from efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems". To realize this vision, and in alignment with FAO's Strategy Framework 2022–31, FAO is strengthening efforts to ensure the food environment in FAO offices is supportive of healthy diets. By doing so, FAO is adopting a culture of leading by example.

Through cross-divisional efforts with the involvement of colleagues from nutrition and facilities management at both central and decentralized offices, the Food and Nutrition Division (ESN) has developed a **healthy food environment checklist**, building on multiple guidance documents and tools to make food environments healthier.<sup>1</sup>

**Food environment** is the physical, economic, political and socio-cultural context in which consumers engage with the food system to make their decisions about acquiring, preparing and consuming food (High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE), 2017). A **healthy food environment** is one that creates the conditions that enable and encourage people to access and choose healthy diets (FAO, 2016).

In December 2022, the healthy food environment checklist was launched on the Country Office Information Network (COIN). In all FAO offices, facilities management with support from nutrition focal points, is required to complete the healthy food environment checklist on the COIN platform annually. The healthy food environment checklist contains 11 recommendations to support FAO's offices to create and maintain a healthy workplace food environment for personnel and visitors. The healthy food environment checklist also provides additional guidance to help FAO's offices implement actions according to their context and priorities as well as to encourage dialogue among FAO personnel to strengthen the food environment in FAO offices.

For this first year of reporting, the results provided by FAO offices worldwide provide critical information on the current food environments in FAO offices and serve as the baseline value for Key Performance Indicator 2.B "*Principle of leading by example is codified by proportion of FAO offices that provide annual data on the Healthy Food Environment Checklist*" of the implementation plan of the 2022–25 Vision and Strategy for FAO's Work in Nutrition.

ESN has developed a webpage (<https://intranet.fao.org/index.php?id=35712>), which includes the healthy food environment checklist and communication and promotional materials on healthy food environments.

## Objectives

This report aims to:

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<sup>1</sup> Annex 2

1. Present the results from the 2022 reporting on the healthy food environment checklist;
2. Identify entry points for further enabling healthy food environments in FAO offices; and
3. Suggest recommendations for future iterations of the healthy food environment checklist.

## Methods

The first reporting cycle for the healthy food environment checklist took place in 2022. Responsible focal points were required to complete the checklist between 1 December 2022 and 28 February 2023. At the end of the reporting period, the results were made available on the [COMMIT](#) platform, where FAO offices could review the results of their respective food environments.

For the purposes of this report, ESN extracted data from the COIN platform and analysed them in Microsoft Excel. All graphical visualizations were also performed in Microsoft Excel.

Moving forward, and based on the results of this first year, improvements will be made to the healthy food environment checklist, ensuring that offices can easily and more precisely report on their food environments.

## Results

Out of 167 FAO offices requested to fill in the healthy food environment checklist, 119 (72 percent) responded. The response rates for each office type are shown in Table 1.

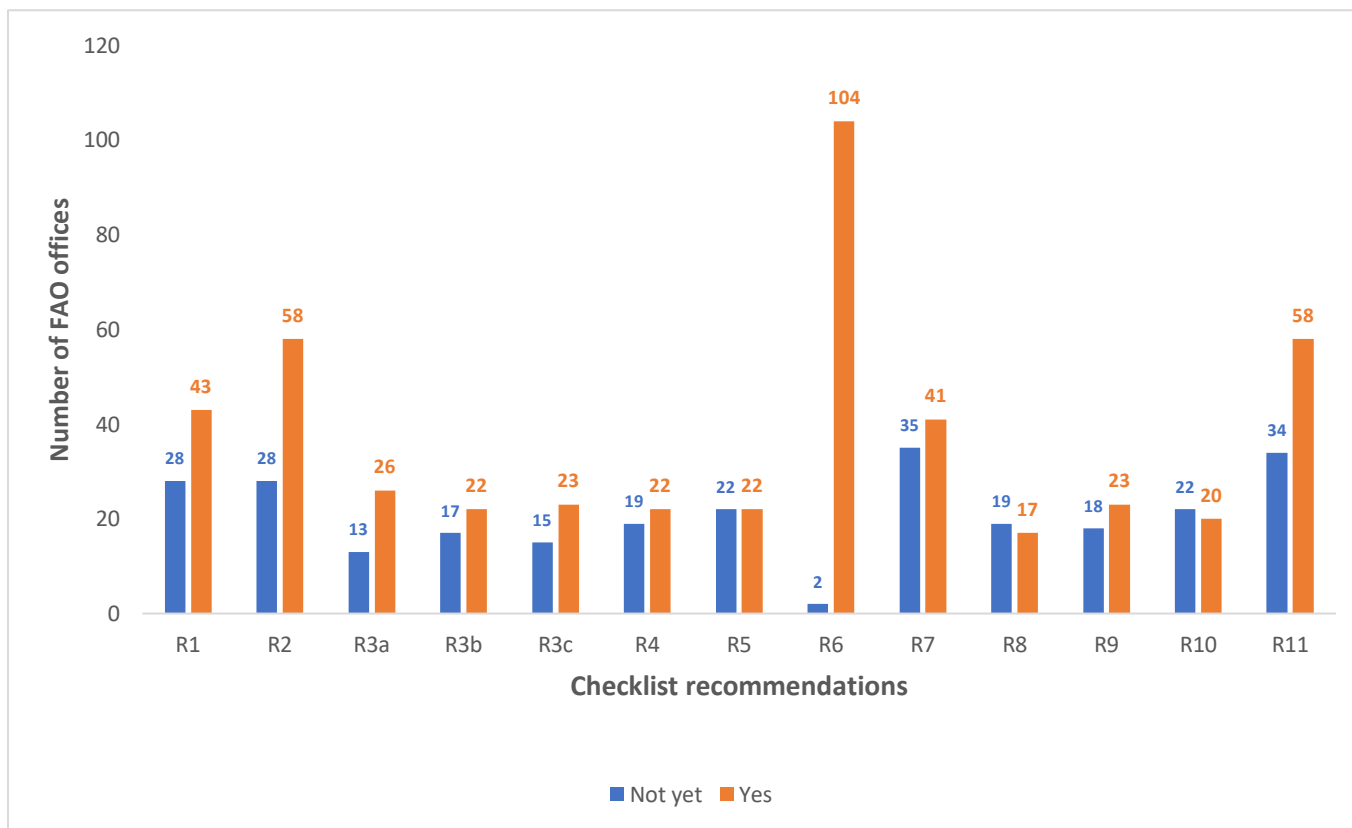
**Table 1: Response rate of FAO offices by office type**

Office type	Responses (Number of offices)	Target (Number of offices)	Response rate (%)
Headquarters	1	1	100%
Liaison Offices	5	6	83%
Regional Offices	5	5	100%
Subregional Offices	6	10	60%
Country Offices	102	145	70%
<b>Total</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>71%</b>

Overall, all reporting FAO offices (119) are taking some actions towards making FAO's food environments healthier. As shown in Figure 1 below, recommendations 1, 2, 6, 7 and 11 had a considerable number of 'yes' responses (43, 58, 104, 41 and 58 respectively). A large number of positive responses related to recommendations for sharing credible information and raising awareness of healthy diets among employees and visitors, as well as providing an enabling environment for healthy diets. For example, 58 FAO offices 'share credible information on healthy diets with employees, through information, education, and/or communication campaigns'. Fifty-eight FAO offices highlighted that they 'ensure that mothers and supervisors are aware of, and encourage the application of, the FAO policy providing for suitable breaks for breastfeeding or expressing milk.' It is important to note that almost all FAO offices (104) 'provide safe drinking water free of charge for FAO visitors and personnel', and 43 'provide suitable areas for breastfeeding and/or expressing and storing breastmilk'. In general, the results show that FAO

offices are doing well in terms of actions needed for healthy food environments. However, there are opportunities to improve certain areas and ensure that FAO's food environments are made healthier.

**Figure 1: Responses to healthy food environment checklist recommendations by all FAO offices**



*\*\*Please see key in Table 2 for descriptions of recommendations*

Source: Author's own elaboration.

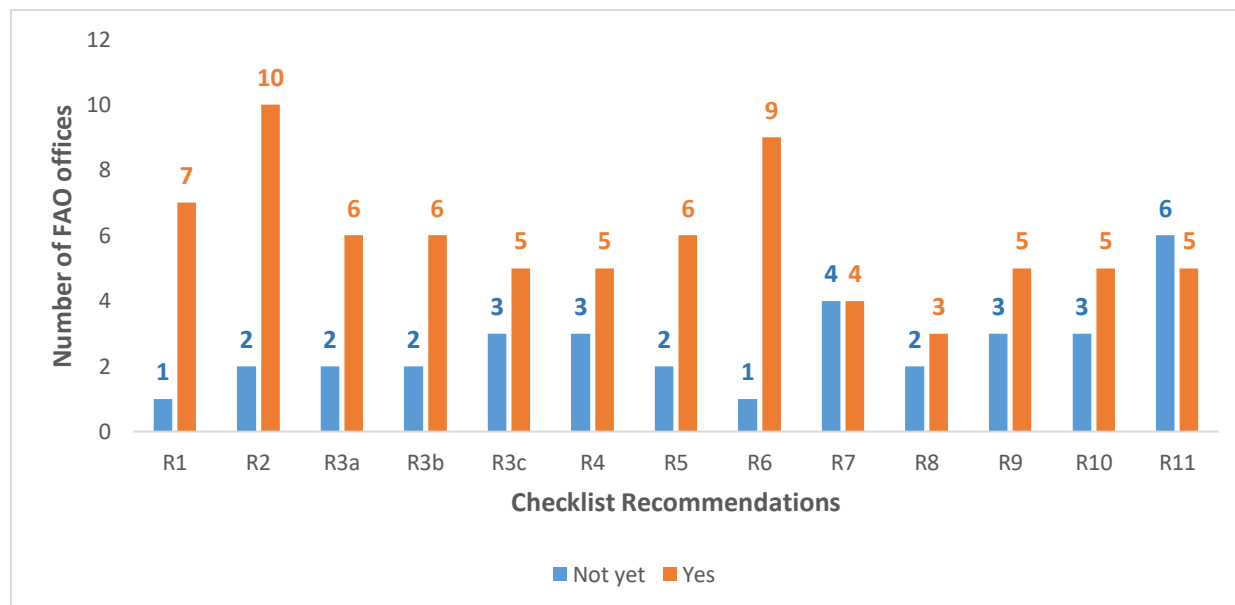
**Table 2: Description of recommendations**

Recommendation	Description
R1	Provides suitable areas for breastfeeding and/or expressing and storing breastmilk.
R2	Ensures that mothers and supervisors are aware of, and encourages the application of, the FAO policy providing for suitable breaks for breastfeeding or expressing milk.
R3a	Offers in its cafeteria/canteen/catering facility a wide variety of fruits and vegetables.
R3b	Offers in its cafeteria/canteen/catering facility a wide variety of nuts and/or wholegrains.
R3c	Offers in its cafeteria/canteen/catering facility a wide variety of legumes and/or pulses, as well as options for the moderate consumption of animal source foods such as eggs, dairy, poultry, fish and red meat.
R4	Offers unprocessed (commonly called 'fresh') or minimally processed food.
R5	Offers food options prepared using low-fat, low-salt, and/or low-sugar methods, as well non-sugar sweetened beverages.
R6	Provides safe drinking water free of charge.
R7	Refers to FAO and World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations or food-based dietary guidelines on healthy diets in planning, procuring, and offering food options to personnel and visitors.
R8	Cafeteria/canteen/catering facilities are Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) certified.
R9	Offers 'half-portion' or 'small plates' in its cafeteria/canteen/catering facility.
R10	Ensures that ingredients and allergens are mentioned in the menu or where food and beverage options are displayed or on their packaging
R11	Shares credible information on healthy diets with employees, through information, education, and/or communication campaigns.

## Headquarters, Liaison, Regional and Subregional Offices

Findings from the Headquarters, Liaison, Regional and Subregional Offices (17) and detailed results are shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Responses to the healthy food environment checklist recommendations by the Headquarters, Liaison, Regional and Subregional Offices**



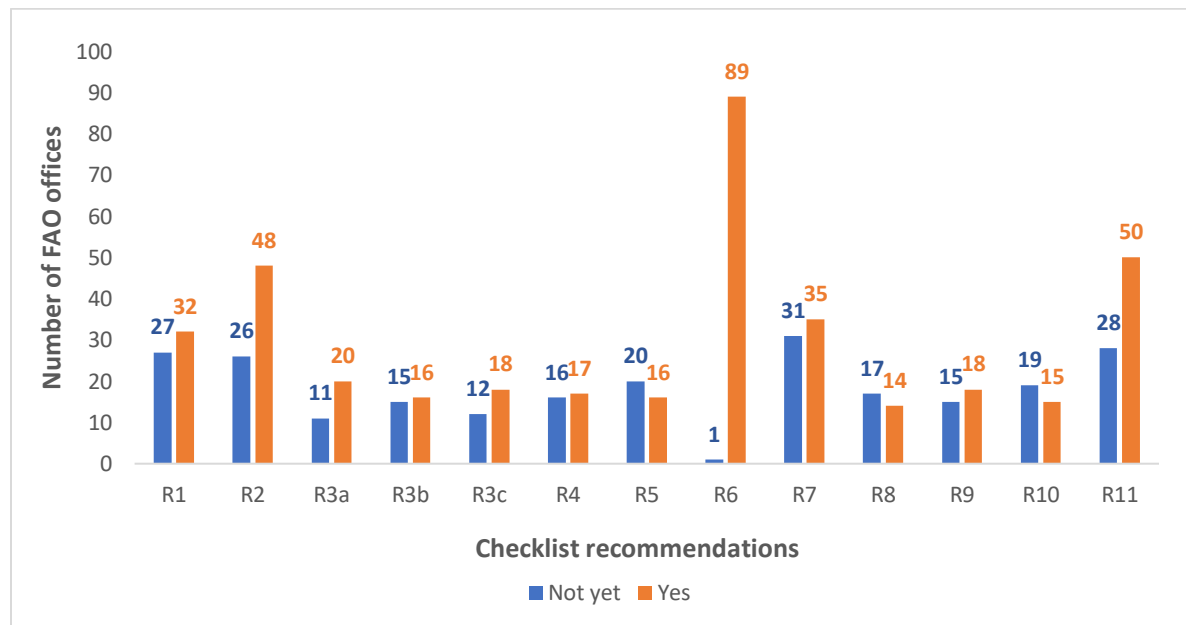
*\*\*Please see key in Table 2 for descriptions of recommendations*

*Source:* Author's own elaboration.

Results show that these offices are already taking important actions to make FAO's food environments healthier. There are a high number of 'Yes' responses across all 11 recommendations. For example, out of 12 offices that replied to the recommendation 'ensure that mothers and supervisors are aware of, and encourage the application of, the FAO policy providing suitable breaks for breastfeeding or expressing milk', 10 responded 'Yes'. Nine offices stated that they 'provide safe drinking water free of charge', and seven offices 'provide suitable areas for breastfeeding and/or expressing and storing breastmilk'. However, only four of the offices 'refer to FAO and WHO recommendations or food-based dietary guidelines on healthy diets in planning, procuring, and offering food options to personnel and visitors', and five offices 'share credible information on healthy diets with employees, through information, education, and/or communication campaigns.' Overall, results from Headquarters, Liaison, Regional and Subregional Offices are encouraging as they suggest that efforts are already underway to ensure FAO facilities have a healthy food environment, and with some additional efforts food environments could be even more conducive to healthy diets for all.

## Country Offices

A total of 102 FAO Country Offices responded 'Yes' to at least one recommendation of the healthy food environment checklist. Detailed results are depicted in Figure 3.



**Figure 3: Responses to the healthy food environment checklist recommendations by FAO Country Offices**

*\*\*Please see key in Table 2 for descriptions of recommendations*

Source: Author's own elaboration.

Many FAO Country Offices are steering efforts towards making FAO food environments healthier. Regarding the recommendation to 'provide safe drinking water free of charge', 89 Country Offices responded 'Yes'. Forty-eight Country Offices reported that they 'ensure that mothers and supervisors are aware of, and encourage the application of, the FAO policy providing suitable breaks for breastfeeding or expressing milk'. However, only 32 stated that they 'provide suitable areas for breastfeeding or expressing and storing breastmilk'. Less than half of offices (50) reported 'sharing credible information on healthy diets with employees, through information, education, and/or communication campaigns'.

Similarly to Headquarters, Regional and Subregional Offices, FAO Country Offices are taking steps to ensure a healthy food environment. The healthy food environment checklist has identified additional opportunities to enhance food environments to make them even healthier.

### Way forward and recommendations

- The healthy food environment checklist provided three response options to each recommendation: 'Yes', 'Not yet' and 'Not applicable'. After further iterations and internal discussions, authors have concluded that the interpretation, and therefore the results of responses related to 'Not applicable' were inconclusive and were not considered in this analysis. As a result, there are plans to improve the healthy food environment checklist for 2023 by



removing the 'Not applicable' response option. Moreover, the checklist may add a question on the presence of catering facilities at the office. A 'No' response to this question will lead to a skip-logic function for all recommendations related to catering facilities.

- FAO nutrition focal points should work with facilities management colleagues to enable and strengthen FAO's healthy food environments and establish initiatives to exchange ideas and strategies.
- Efforts will be made to ensure progress on response rates and increase the involvement of FAO offices on strengthening the healthy food environment. These will include translating the healthy food environment checklist into French and Spanish and providing guidance on how to complete the checklist on COIN.
- Communications materials will be further developed and disseminated to promote healthy food environments within FAO at headquarters and decentralised offices, aiming for a specific aspect of a healthy food environment or related to specific relevant events.
- Increased collaboration with communications focal points and other divisions will help realize these ideas.
- A combination of these results with qualitative analysis, involving a set of FAO offices (selected on the basis of size, context, and geographical coverage) could be explored in order to have a clearer understanding of FAO's food environments.

## Conclusion

- For this first reporting year, the overall response rate from FAO Offices (72 percent) is encouraging. Progress is expected next year, following greater communications and awareness-raising efforts.
- All reporting FAO offices (119) are taking some actions towards making FAO's food environments healthier, particularly in areas related to raising awareness and sharing credible information on healthy diets and providing safe drinking water and breastfeeding spaces across FAO offices.
- The findings from the healthy food environment checklist pose a critical starting point to focus efforts that can make the food environment healthier for all personnel and visitors in FAO offices around the world.
- The findings also identified areas where FAO offices can take key actions while engaging with colleagues across FAO offices.
- Initiatives such as the healthy food environment checklist aim to inspire and enable FAO facilities around the world to implement food environments that are healthy and support better nutrition and, as a result, better lives for all those that contribute to the work of FAO every day.

## References

1. High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE). 2017. *Nutrition and food systems. A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security*. Rome. <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/l7846E>
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