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Progress on updating the Strategy on Nutrition

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PC 127

Executive Summary

The 126th session of the Programme Committee in March 2019, in discussing the *Evaluation of the strategy and vision for FAO's work in nutrition* recommended an update of the Vision and Strategy. The Vision and Strategy will be submitted to the sessions of FAO's Technical Committees (on Agriculture, Commodity Problems, Fisheries, and Forestry) to be held in 2020, as well as to the 129th session of the Programme Committee in November 2020. It is proposed that the vision would be that food systems are enabling sustainable, healthy diets for all. It is proposed that the Strategy would outline the conceptual framework required to enhance FAO role in supporting the five overarching areas of focus.

- Area of focus 1. Globally, regionally, nationally, and locally there is clarity of vision of attaining sustainable, healthy diets, and the changes needed to transform the food system to achieve sustainable, healthy diets and improve nutrition.
- Area of focus 2. Partnerships among multiple stakeholders are forged and strengthened to enhance a common understanding of, and commitment to the needed changes in policy and action to achieve sustainable, healthy diets.
- Area of focus 3. Global, regional, national, and local partners are fully engaged in identifying the role their current policies are playing towards change, and they are engaged with the food systems transformation, including innovations, needed to enhance policy coherence and impact.
- Area of focus 4. Capacity is sufficient in countries, and governance structures are working effectively at global, regional, national, and local levels to enable policies, innovations, and actions to be successful.
- Area of focus 5. Government actors and other stakeholders are implementing the key policies, innovations, and actions needed for positive transformation to ensure food systems deliver sustainable, healthy diets.

Effective implementation of the Strategy will be captured in an implementation plan that outlines focus areas of FAO's core functions.

Guidance sought from the Programme Committee

The Committee is invited to review and provide guidance on the annotated outline, in particular on the five overarching areas of focus.

Introduction

1. Malnutrition is one of the greatest developmental challenges the world faces. According to the *State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World* (SOFI, 2019) report, an estimated 821 million individuals are suffering from chronic hunger. Some 150 million children under the age of five are stunted, one in three women of reproductive age is anaemic, and approximately 2 billion people are overweight of which 672 million are obese and 38 million are overweight children under the age of five.
2. Endorsing the proposal for evaluation of thematic strategies, the Programme Committee in its 121st Session in March 2017, requested that an evaluation of the Strategy and Vision of FAO's Work in Nutrition be carried out six years after its adoption.¹
3. The *Evaluation of the Strategy and Vision of FAO's Work in Nutrition*² was presented to the Programme Committee at its 126th Session in March 2019, and recommended, among others, to update the Strategy and Vision for FAO's Work on Nutrition by placing focus on all forms of malnutrition, articulating the contribution of food systems to nutrition, and including a robust accountability framework.

I. Global developments related to nutrition

4. In November 2014, FAO and the World Health Organization (WHO), co-hosted the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), which adopted the Rome Declaration on Nutrition³ and its Framework for Action (FfA).⁴ The Rome Declaration sets out a common vision for global action to eradicate hunger and end all forms of malnutrition, including undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, overweight and obesity, making ten broad policy commitments. The FfA sets forth 60 recommendations to guide the effective implementation of the commitments enshrined in the Rome Declaration.
5. In September 2015, the international community subscribed to 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aimed at paving a trajectory towards a hunger-free, more equitable and more sustainable world by 2030. The guidance from the evaluation and the Programme Committee is in line with increased recognition that nutrition is a driver of sustainable development and that all SDGs are influenced by nutrition and the food system. Furthermore, the work of FAO can make a substantial contribution to support governments to reach their SDG targets.
6. In April 2016, the UN General Assembly endorsed the Rome Declaration on Nutrition and the FfA, and proclaimed the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025) (Decade) through Resolution 70/259⁵ whereby FAO and WHO were mandated to: (i) co-lead the implementation of the Decade, in collaboration with WFP, IFAD and UNICEF; (ii) develop a work programme for the Decade, using coordination mechanisms such as the United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN) and the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), in consultation with other international and regional organizations and platforms; and (iii) produce biennial reports for use by the UN Secretary-General to inform the UN General Assembly about the Decade's implementation.
7. Importantly, aforementioned global developments emphasize the critical role that agriculture and food systems can play in reducing all forms of malnutrition; and at the same time, provide impetus to the call to transform food systems by shifting focus from producing enough food to ensuring sustainable healthy diets.
8. FAO has a comparative advantage in advancing improvements in food systems to improve diets since it is the only international entity to work across all aspects of food systems, covering the production, aggregation, processing, distribution, consumption and disposal of food products, and with

¹ CL 156/3

² PC 126/3; PC 126/3 Sup.1

³ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-m1542e.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mm215e.pdf>

⁵ https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/259

crop and livestock production, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture systems. Furthermore, many of the drivers of food system functioning such as international trade, Internet and e-commerce, climate change, and migration, are transnational in nature underscoring the role of the United Nations and multinational partners. Global collaboration is necessary to transform food systems to deliver sustainable, healthy diets and reach SDGs.

9. FAO's work on nutrition must involve addressing all forms of malnutrition and the advancement of sustainable, healthy diets. The aim is to enhance the lives of individuals and attain progress across the SDGs. It must remain focused on results, at all times, with clear pathways for how to achieve, measure and evaluate impact.

II. Nutrition within FAO's Strategic Framework

10. Raising levels of nutrition is the first goal articulated in the FAO constitution. The core work done by FAO addresses direct, underlying and root causes of malnutrition and can support greater gains in improving nutrition and development of nations.

11. FAO has recognized nutrition as a corporate cross-cutting theme. The PWB 2016-17⁶ identified the integration of nutrition throughout the work of FAO as part of corporate Objective 6. This offered an opportunity to facilitate focused coordination and alignment of the many threads of FAO's work to ensure consistency and maximum impact of FAO's standards, guidance and best practices.

III. Strategy and Vision for FAO's work in Nutrition - Roadmap

12. As requested by the Programme Committee at its 126th session, FAO developed an annotated outline for laying the groundwork for updating of the Strategy and Vision and of FAO's Work on Nutrition. The process for the development of the final document from that outline includes the following events:

- a) discussion of the annotated outline at the 127th session of the Programme Committee;
- b) discussion of the draft Strategy and Vision and at 2020 sessions of the Technical Committees - Committees on Agriculture (COAG); Commodity Problems (CCP); Fisheries (COFI) and Forestry (COFO);
- c) approval and recommendations by the 129th session of the Programme Committee (November 2020); and
- d) endorsement by the 164th session of the FAO Council (November-December 2020).

13. As an initial step, a Technical Task Team for the Strategy and Vision Development has been formed. It is comprised of representatives from all regional offices and technical departments across FAO headquarters, to provide inputs from across the Organization.

14. Members' inputs to the draft Strategy and Vision will be provided through FAO's Technical Committees at their 2020 sessions and incorporated into the draft Strategy and Vision and to be presented to the 129th session of the Programme Committee for final approval in November 2020.

15. Overcoming the global challenges of malnutrition will take an enormous effort that must be large-scale and well coordinated. Therefore, FAO will seek input to the Strategy and Vision from key external partners, including the World Health Organization, UNICEF, and the Rome-based agencies. Bilateral consultations will occur during the first half of 2020.

16. The resultant Strategy and Vision is expected to: (i) outline the strategic choices and action priorities informed by main challenges in Nutrition and FAO's comparative advantages (at global, regional, and national levels); (ii) guide FAO's work to improve nutrition; and (iii) strengthen its impact in delivering FAO's work on nutrition. The Strategy and Vision will be complemented by an Implementation Plan detailing operationalization of the Strategy considering differing contexts and priorities.

⁶ C 2015/3

IV. Strategy and Vision for FAO's work in Nutrition - Annotated Outline

17. The Strategy and Vision will comprise the following sections: Introduction, Context, Vision; Approach; General Principles; Expected Areas of focus; Means of Implementation; and Accountability Framework.

18. **Introduction:** The Strategy and Vision will start with an explanation of its purpose; namely, “to define the goal, role and strategic approach of FAO in supporting good nutrition and addressing malnutrition in all its forms.” It will distinguish FAO’s contribution to supporting good nutrition now and in the future, articulating that sustainable, healthy diets within food systems are the focus for FAO’s work on nutrition. The introduction will show how nutrition is vital to achieving corporate objectives of FAO and supporting countries to reach their targets for the SDGs. It will emphasize the imperative for FAO to advance its Organization-wide approach to nutrition in order to fulfil its leadership commitment under the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016-2025. It will show that FAO has significantly increased its emphasis on nutrition since the adoption in 2012 of the last Strategy and Vision. It will build on the recommendations from the Evaluation of the 2012 Strategy and Vision for FAO’s Work on Nutrition and will have a 5-year time horizon.

19. **Context:** This section will expound on the following factors influencing the update of the Strategy and Vision for FAO’s Work on Nutrition:

- a) The nature of the burden of malnutrition is changing. It has many forms (e.g. wasting, stunting, micronutrient deficiencies, overweight and obesity) and all of them are important. The challenge of malnutrition also extends to diet-related, non-communicable diseases (NCDs), the number one cause of mortality globally. Food insecurity is associated with all forms of malnutrition, but malnutrition is not confined to only nations, communities, and individuals that suffer food insecurity. It is a global challenge faced by all countries.
- b) The world is undergoing major structural changes that both affect malnutrition, and are influenced by it, such as climate change, conflicts and other crises, rapid population growth and urbanization, and poverty.
- c) The past decade has seen the development of new goals (SDGs) and numerous initiatives and opportunities (e.g. UN Decade of Action on Nutrition) to catalyze advances in nutrition, and an increase in the number of organizations relevant to nutrition.

20. **Vision:** The Vision for the Strategy will guide the development of the Strategy itself and focus its implementation planning. The Vision is: food systems are enabling sustainable, healthy diets for all. That is, food systems are enhancing the availability, affordability, acceptability and appeal of sustainable, healthy diets. This Vision emphasizes the comparative advantage of FAO in focusing on the food-related aspect of nutrition, and on the role of food systems in supporting people to eat healthier diets, while considering environmental, social, cultural, and economic concerns. The Vision would include a definition of what is meant by “sustainable, healthy diets” (e.g. that it includes food safety) and a “food systems approach” to attaining sustainable, healthy diets.

21. **Approach:** Following from the Vision, the main focus of FAO’s work on nutrition is to support the implementation of policies, innovations, and actions across food systems at the global, regional, national, and local levels that will enable sustainable, healthy diets for all. It will build from the expertise of FAO in all domains of the food system – food supply chain, food environment, and consumer behaviour.

22. **Guiding principles:** FAO’s work on nutrition will be guided by the following principles: (i) all individuals have a right to adequate food; (ii) gender equity and equality must be elevated and adverse gender-related impacts must be avoided; (iii) partnerships are critical to end all forms of malnutrition and the leading role of partners in other vital areas such as health system strengthening and education is recognized and supported; and (iv) taking a systems approach implies quantifying and balancing the potential trade-offs to make sustainable, healthy diets available, affordable, acceptable and appealing for all by weighing the impact of various policies and actions on different aspects of sustainability (environment, society and culture, economy) without compromising the health of individuals.

23. Expected Areas of focus: Building on the vision and guiding principles outlined above, the proposed Nutrition strategy will define the conceptual framework within which the following strategic areas of focus aligned with FAO strategic framework can be attained:

- a) Areas of focus 1. A vision for sustainable, healthy diets and a roadmap of key changes in food systems needed to achieve them is set. Globally, regionally, nationally, and locally there is clarity of vision of attaining sustainable, healthy diets, and the changes needed to transform the food system to achieve sustainable, healthy diets and improve nutrition.
- b) Areas of focus. Greater agreement and commitment at both global and national levels about change. Partnerships among multiple stakeholders are forged and strengthened to enhance a common understanding of and commitment to the needed changes in policy and action to achieve sustainable, healthy diets.
- c) Areas of focus 3. Countries are engaged in enhancements needed for policy coherence across the food system. Global, regional, national, and local partners are fully engaged in identifying the role their current policies are playing towards change, and they are engaged with the positive transformation, including innovations, needed to enhance policy coherence and impact.
- d) Areas of focus 4. Enhanced capacity for implementation. Capacity is sufficient in countries and governance structures are working effectively at global, regional, national, and local levels to enable policies, innovations, and actions to be successful.
- e) Areas of focus 5. Policies, innovations, and actions implemented. Government actors and other stakeholders are implementing the key policies, innovations, and actions needed for positive transformation to ensure food systems deliver sustainable, healthy diets.

V. Means of Implementation

24. The Strategy will clearly detail the means through which FAO will deliver these areas of focus and will be accompanied by an implementation plan. Five pillars of action, each one embedded in an FAO core function, which interact together to form a logic model for change, will guide action while allowing for modification based on context and priorities.

25. Pillar 1. Following the core FAO function of putting information within reach, FAO will collate data, conduct analysis and synthesize evidence. At the global level this will result in knowledge products to inform the development and understanding of a vision of change towards sustainable, healthy diets, the options for key changes across food systems needed to get there, analysis of the trade-offs involved between environmental sustainability, socio-cultural impact, and economy, and potential ways to improve policy coherence. At the national level this will result in country diagnostics that can inform local policy and action and generate a context-specific common understanding of challenges and responses to attain sustainable, healthy diets.

26. Pillar 2. Following FAO core function of providing a meeting place for nations and partners, including development partners, civil society and the private sector. FAO, as a credible neutral actor, will facilitate and broker strengthen dialogue and common understanding of changes needed to positively transform food systems for sustainable, healthy diets. This would involve the development of new and stronger partnerships and mutual accountability at all levels built on common knowledge, trust, and engagement.

27. Pillar 3. Following FAO core FAO function of providing policy support, FAO will engage countries and partners in policy analysis to identify the role existing policies are playing towards sustainable, healthy diets, gaps in policy, and what changes and innovations are needed to enhance coherence and impact across the food system.

28. Pillar 4. Following FAO core function of developing capacities, FAO will enhance national capacities across the individual, organizational, and policy level to facilitate the development of governance structures and partnerships needed for policy and action implementation.

29. Pillar 5. Following FAO core function of sharing know-how, skills and expertise, FAO will provide technical assistance for action to ensure delivery functions are operating. It will bring the collective knowledge of the Organization to the field to share know-how, skills, and expertise for enhanced action across the food system.

VI. Accountability Framework

30. An accountability framework aligned with corporate programming, reporting and accountability mechanisms will accompany the Strategy and Vision. The purpose will be to provide a framework to ensure FAO is held accountable as an Organization for delivering the strategy, and to monitor and assess the impact of the work aligned to the corporate goals and the SDGs.