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FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Thirty-sixth session

19-21 October 2020¹

Transforming food systems for healthy diets for all

Executive summary²

Latin America and the Caribbean faces a rapid nutritional transition. The rate of hunger was almost halved between 2000 and 2018, from 11.9 percent to 6.5 percent, while the prevalence of overweight and obesity in adults increased from 49.8 percent to 59.6 percent in almost the same period. Premature deaths due to poor diet, and the costs associated with the treatment of associated non-communicable diseases, are an increasing burden on national budgets.

This change in the nutritional situation is related, in large part, to the rapid evolution of our food systems. New dietary habits have developed in a context in which a larger proportion of the population is living in urban centres, with more sedentary habits, eating more frequently outside the home and with less time to purchase and prepare healthier food options.

Today, food systems need to be significantly transformed to meet the food requirements of a growing population and new consumption patterns, while taking care of human health and the planet. This represents an opportunity for agriculture, fisheries and forestry to move towards new forms of sustainable production, driving technological and policy innovations to face these challenges.

This transformation requires effective public initiatives, investments, research and partnerships to change the way food is produced and consumed. It also implies better access to data and knowledge and improved governance to balance the interests of all the actors involved in food systems, where the public will have to play a more important role as the realization of the right to adequate food and health of citizens in the region is threatened.

¹ Rescheduled from 27-29 April 2020, Managua, Nicaragua.

² This document focuses on one of FAO's three priorities in the region, and should be considered in the context of the other two priorities addressed in the documents LARC/20/3 "Hand-in-Hand towards prosperous and inclusive rural societies" and LARC/20/4 "Sustainable and climate resilient agriculture".

Recommendations for the Regional Conference

- Reaffirm that, in order to achieve the “Zero Hunger” goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Sustainable Development Goal [SDG] 2), the urgent transformation of food systems is required to ensure access to healthy diets by the 42.5 million people who suffer from the scourge of hunger and the more than 262 million who are overweight in the region.
- Request assistance from FAO to promote improved evidence and analysis for a new generation of food and nutrition policies that address malnutrition in all its forms, through a healthy and sustainable food systems approach for healthy diets and better nutrition.
- Request FAO’s support in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of regulations and policy instruments that promote healthy eating for all, through:
(a) efficiently and sustainably increasing the production of foods that contribute to healthy diets; (b) fostering inclusive food distribution systems; (c) evaluating trade policy measures and their role in promoting food security and nutrition; (d) improving food safety and quality; (e) promoting fiscal and social policies to facilitate economic access to healthy diets; (f) regulating food marketing and advertising to ensure that consumers have consistent, reliable information; and (g) stimulating the development of healthy eating habits.
- Request assistance from FAO to promote the development and implementation of public policies that contribute to food security and nutrition (FSN), eliminating discrimination in all its forms, and take progressive steps to achieve the full realization of the right to adequate food.
- Request FAO’s support to facilitate public-private dialogues, in coordination with governments, to reach agreements and identify innovative solutions that contribute to healthy diets and sustainable food systems.
- Urge FAO to mobilize resources to support countries in the development of policies and innovations for healthy eating, which includes the monitoring and evaluation of results and the contribution of science and technology in this area.

Please send any questions about this document to:

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I. Challenges for healthy eating in Latin America and the Caribbean

1. Food consumption patterns have changed in recent decades, causing a reduction in the proportion in diets of staple foods, such as cereals, tubers, fruits, vegetables and water, while the consumption of products rich in added sugars, fats and salt has increased.³
2. The change in consumption patterns has generated a radical change in the nutritional situation of the region, meaning that today overweight and obesity coexist with undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. Of the 33 countries in the region, at least 26 face two or more malnutrition problems simultaneously.⁴ In addition, it is estimated that one in six deaths among adults is caused by non-communicable diseases associated with poor nutrition.⁵
3. Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) has made considerable progress over the past two decades in terms of eradicating hunger. The undernourishment rate was almost halved between 2000 and 2014, from 11.9 percent to 6.1 percent. This meant that 24.6 million people stopped suffering from hunger. However, the latest data from FAO indicates that hunger in the region has increased by 4.5 million since 2014, which has caused the rate of hunger to remain around 6.5 percent. The Caribbean concentrates the highest prevalence of population suffering from hunger with 18.4 percent, followed by Mesoamerica and South America, with rates of 6.1 percent and 5.5 percent, respectively.⁶
4. Concurrently the LAC region is experiencing an accelerated increase in overweight and obesity. The proportion of children under 5 years old who are overweight rose from 6.6 percent to 7.5 percent in two decades, exceeding the current global average of 5.9 percent. Today it is estimated that 4 million children are overweight, with South America having the highest rates, followed closely by the Caribbean, and to a lesser extent Central America. Overweight and obesity in adults increased from 32 percent in 1975 to 50 percent in 2000 and 60 percent in 2016, which means that 262 million adults in the region are overweight, of which more than 100 million are considered obese (see Figure 1).⁷
5. Gender gaps in malnutrition must be added to the challenges mentioned above. Food insecurity affects 69 million women in the region compared to almost 55 million men in the 2016-2018 triennium. Overweight and obesity are more frequent among women than men: in 19 countries of the region, the prevalence of obesity among women is at least 10 percentage points higher than that of men.⁸
6. Costs derived from the treatment of non-communicable diseases related to overweight and obesity are increasingly impacting national budgets. Globally, obesity is estimated to cost USD 2 trillion a year - equivalent to 2.8 percent of world GDP - largely as a result of the value assigned to the loss of economic productivity added to the direct costs of health care globally.⁹
7. These changes are related to the rapid evolution of food systems in the region and globally, which are occurring in the context of a greater proportion of the population living in urban areas, more sedentary lifestyles, and reduced availability of time for the purchase, preparation and consumption of food.

³ Rapallo, R. and Rivera, R. 2019. *Nuevos patrones alimentarios, más desafíos para los sistemas alimentarios. 2030 - Alimentación, agricultura y desarrollo rural en América Latina y el Caribe*, No. 11. Santiago. FAO.

⁴ FAO, PAHO, WFP and UNICEF. 2018. *Regional Overview of Food and Nutritional Security in Latin America and the Caribbean 2018*. Santiago.

⁵ FAO, PAHO, WFP and UNICEF. 2019. *Regional Overview of Food and Nutritional Security in Latin America and the Caribbean 2019*. Santiago.

⁶ FAO, IFAD, WHO, WFP and UNICEF. 2019. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World: Safeguarding against economic slowdowns and downturns*. Rome, FAO.

⁷ FAO, PAHO, WFP and UNICEF. 2019. *Op. cit.*

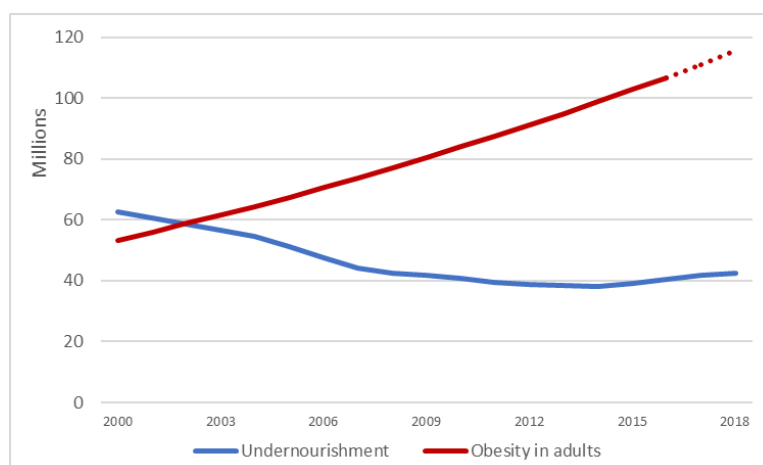
⁸ FAO, PAHO, WFP and UNICEF. 2018. *Op. cit.*

⁹ FAO, IFAD, WHO, WFP and UNICEF. 2019. *Op. cit.*

8. Today, LAC shows a wide heterogeneity in the configuration of its food systems, ranging from systems that are highly capitalized and integrated into global marketing chains, to those based on minimally processed and local food products. However, in most systems, there is a growing supply of highly processed products that are energy dense and high in fat, sugar and/or salt, which have replaced other foods mainly because of their wide availability, heavy promotion, low relative cost and ease of preservation and use, in accordance with changes in the work culture and other social practices.

9. The growth in trade has increased the year-round availability and physical access to fresh food in global markets, but it has also increased access, in both urban and rural areas, to energy dense highly processed products with high levels of fat, sugar and/or salt and limited nutritional value.¹⁰ Various studies have shown that foods that contribute to healthier diets, such as fruits and vegetables, are more expensive on average than highly processed products that are highly energy dense.¹¹ There is also evidence of high heterogeneity in access to healthy diets within a country depending on the type of food and cost at the local level, affecting different population groups differently.¹² Therefore, it is not surprising that people in conditions of poverty and vulnerability face greater economic difficulties in accessing healthy diets. This trend has been increasing in the last 30 to 40 years in the LAC region.¹³

Figure 1. Evolution of undernourishment and obesity in adults in LAC, 2000-2018



Note: Obesity data in adults for 2017 and 2018 refer to projections.

Source: Own elaboration based on data from FAO and WHO, 2019

10. LAC faces the double challenge of achieving SDG 2 to eradicate hunger and all forms of malnutrition, including overweight and obesity. The strategy to achieve this goal should include promoting the transformation of food systems through policies aimed at ensuring that the entire population has access to sufficient, nutritious, and diversified food.

11. Specifically, it is necessary to: (a) efficiently and sustainably increase food production that contributes to healthy diets; (b) facilitate inclusive food distribution systems; (c) evaluate trade policy measures and their role in promoting foods security and nutrition; (d) improve food safety and quality; (e) promote fiscal and social policies to facilitate physical and economic access to healthy diets;

¹⁰ De Soysa and de Soysa. 2017. *Do Globalization and Free Markets Drive Obesity among Children and Youth? An Empirical Analysis, 1990-2013. International Interactions*, 1-19

¹¹ FAO, PAHO, WFP and UNICEF (2018). *Regional Overview of Food and Nutritional Security in Latin America and the Caribbean 2018*. Santiago.

¹² For more information see "Fill the Nutrient Gap" in *Development Initiatives, 2018 Global Nutrition Report: Shining a light to spur action on nutrition*. Bristol, UK.

¹³ Popkin, B., and Reardon, T. 2018. *Obesity and the food system transformation in Latin America. Obesity Reviews*, 19(8), 1028–1064.

(f) regulate food marketing, advertising and information of foods that do not support healthy diets; and
(g) stimulate the development of healthy eating habits.¹⁴

12. In addition to the above, it is necessary to develop a new institutional framework that can promote this transformation of food systems, accompanied by the necessary human capacities and investments, and better research, information systems and analytics to generate more evidence and better targeted solutions.

II. New food policies to reduce malnutrition

II.1 Increased food supply and physical access to healthy diets for all

A. Increasing the production of food in an efficient and sustainable manner to contribute to healthy diets

13. Food availability in LAC reaches more than 3 000 kilocalories per day per person on average, a quantity that considerably exceeds the minimum energy requirements in the region.¹⁵ Almost all countries in the region have enough food to meet the minimum calorie requirements.

14. However, not all countries have the quantity, quality and diversity of food necessary to ensure healthy diets for their entire population. Although the region is a major producer of fruits, vegetables, legumes, fish, meats, dairy products and other products rich in fibre, protein, vitamins, minerals and other essential nutrients, their per capita availability is insufficient to guarantee minimum standards for healthy diets.¹⁶ This is especially relevant for groups that face multiple inequalities such as women, youth, children and indigenous peoples. Access to food, both physical and economical, is also an issue.

15. In this policy area, FAO offers technical assistance to member countries in areas such as:

- Developing programmes to promote the production of food with high nutritional value, aligned with national dietary guidelines, while also promoting sustainable and nutrition-sensitive agriculture. These initiatives include policy instruments to provide productive assets, financing, training and organization for the inclusion of small and medium producers, including women and youth.¹⁷ It is also an ideal space to develop technological innovations that increase the productivity of these foods (with low or no environmental impact) and identify and promote the region's ample biodiversity, and traditional or indigenous knowledge and practices.
- Promoting decent work in the agri-food sector, as a key dimension of the social sustainability of agri-food systems.
- Promoting the responsible and optimal use of antimicrobials in food production, and increasing the health status of production systems to minimize the need for their use. Supporting the prohibition of growth promoters and the progressive adoption of alternatives to their use.

¹⁴ LARC/20/3 "Hand-in-Hand towards prosperous and inclusive rural societies" describes in detail the proposed policy areas for the elimination of hunger and malnutrition in the region, which are complementary to those indicated in this document.

¹⁵ Food availability is related to food supply, which is determined by production, imports and exports and food storage (FAO, 2011c).

¹⁶ FAO, PAHO, WFP and UNICEF. 2018. *Op. cit.*

¹⁷ The different challenges and opportunities in the region to ensure more sustainable and inclusive production are described in greater detail in LARC/20/3 "Hand-in-Hand towards prosperous and inclusive rural societies".

- Collaborating with social and private sector organizations, including those that use the principles of the so-called circular economy,¹⁸ in the development of regulatory frameworks and technical instruments that encourage the adoption of food production, processing, storage, distribution, and marketing measures to reduce food losses and waste.
- Promoting dialogue and knowledge sharing about new artificially produced or functional type food products, among others. For example, analysing the adaptation of these products to the lifestyles and nutritional requirements of different age groups.

B. Facilitating inclusive food distribution systems that promote healthy diets for the entire population

16. The demand for food is estimated to increase by 50 percent by 2050 compared to the levels at the beginning of the century.¹⁹ Therefore, new forms of collaboration with private actors will be needed to meet future food demand in a sustainable manner.

17. The distribution and marketing systems of agricultural products within countries constitute an opportunity to improve access to fresh and nutrient-dense foods for consumers living in different socioeconomic situations and environments in the region (large urban centres, intermediate cities, rural or remote areas). In addition, they present an opportunity for the social and economic inclusion of the main producers of these products, such as family farmers, women, young people, indigenous populations and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

18. FAO offers technical assistance to member countries in areas such as:

- Identifying and supporting the implementation of policy innovations, technological strategies and business models (e-commerce or new fresh food distribution companies) that help food distribution chains and supermarkets provide a greater supply of foods that support healthy diets for the entire population. For example, FAO can provide technical assistance to identify and exchange experiences that help improve and modernize the operation of supply centres and traditional retail stores.
- Establishing short food supply chains in spaces such as outdoor markets, traditional markets, local grocery stores, or through the promotion of agreements between producers and retail chains to facilitate physical access to these foods. These initiatives can, in turn, boost the local economy and generate employment by prioritizing the participation of family farming, SMEs, women, young people, indigenous people, and those businesses associated with supply chains (food packaging, transport, added value and distribution).
- Supporting the development of policies and regulations such as zoning and tax incentives to minimize so-called “food deserts and swamps”.²⁰ These strategies should include the promotion of food retail stores that contribute to healthy diets, as well as the creation of spaces for dialogue between representatives of supermarket chains and consumers that facilitate access to healthy diets for the entire population, including in public spaces such as schools, hospitals, etc.

¹⁸ Circular economy: An economic concept that is included in the framework of sustainable development and whose objective is the production of goods and services, while reducing the consumption and waste of raw materials, water and energy sources (definition of the FAO Terminology Portal).

¹⁹ FAO. 2017. *The future of food and agriculture – Trends and challenges*. Rome.

²⁰ The term “food desert” refers to the absence or geographical remoteness of food, while “food swamp” indicates a relative abundance of foods with low nutritional value.

C. Identify and evaluate trade policy measures to contribute to healthier diets

19. International trade plays an important role in food security and nutrition. It allows food to be transferred from surplus areas to deficit areas, as well as coping with production deficits caused by extreme weather events. International trade based on multilateral rules and institutions, accessible and transparent information, and the absence of distorting policies, is an essential component of countries' policies for achieving sufficient, nutritious and diversified food consumption patterns.

20. FAO works to promote the development, transparency and efficiency of global markets for agricultural products, and supports member countries in the formulation and implementation of trade policies that promote the improvement of food security and nutrition.

21. FAO offers member countries technical assistance in areas such as:

- Supporting international trade governance processes, in particular those under the auspices of multilateral organizations, by providing guidance on trade policy, support in the preparation of trade negotiations, or in the development and implementation of guidelines that promote transparency and market integration, as well as environmental and social safeguards, and encourage the inclusion of different actors in regional and global value chains.
- Promoting intra-regional and global trade to increase the supply of safe foods that contribute to healthy diets, while taking into account cultural differences and nutrition.

D. Promoting food safety and quality for all

22. Food safety and quality can affect people's health and therefore has a close relationship with food security and nutrition. Food safety refers to reducing the risks of food having harmful effects on people's health. Meanwhile, quality refers to the size, shape, colour, texture, flavour and nutritional composition of food products, in addition to the way in which they are produced or processed.

23. Poverty, lower educational levels, precarious working conditions, lack of basic services such as water for human consumption and discrimination based on gender or ethnicity tend to generate inequalities in access to safe and quality food and healthy diets.

24. In addition, some countries in the region face limitations in order to develop adequate regulatory frameworks or lack the financial and technical resources necessary for the timely monitoring of food quality and safety.

25. FAO offers technical assistance to member countries in several areas, including:

- Building alliances with animal and plant health, public health and rural development services to promote health and safety in the production of foods, including those produced by family farmers, women, youth and indigenous peoples, in order to facilitate their access to formal markets, while protecting people's health and safeguarding local agricultural heritage.
- Strengthening dialogue in the region to develop and implement international standards in different areas (sanitary and phytosanitary measures, consumption, nutrition), with clear, multilateral, non-discriminatory and equitable rules. In this regard, FAO plays a key role in the Joint FAO/World Health Organization (WHO) Codex Alimentarius Commission and the Secretariat for the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC).
- Providing advice on the design and implementation of policies and standards that establish voluntary or mandatory guidelines with the objective of improving the quality of food and food environments. In particular, FAO can help establish criteria and instruments to

facilitate classification of foods and beverages that contain an excessive amount of critical nutrients with respect to existing recommendations.

- Promoting dialogue between different actors, including associations of food consumers and the food industry, for the development of food products that have greater nutritional value and a reduced amount of ingredients that increase the risk of metabolic diseases.

II.2 Facilitating economic access, access to information and better eating habits to promote healthy diets for all

A. Promoting fiscal and social policies that facilitate economic access to food that contributes to healthy diets

26. Family income is a key factor influencing the types of diets households choose. Currently, it is estimated that more than 64 million people in the region have insufficient income to access a food basket that meets their daily caloric needs.²¹ Moreover, a basic food basket that meets the international nutritional recommendations may be unaffordable for a large part of the population.²²

27. In addition, food prices have a great influence on the quality of food consumed in households. Low-income households tend to have lower quality diets that include foods of high caloric density and low nutritional value because such diets tend to be relatively cheaper compared to the foods that comprise healthy diets.²³

28. FAO offers member countries technical assistance in areas such as:

- Identifying and implementing fiscal policies and designing tax models that discourage the frequent consumption of highly processed foods that contain high amounts of added sugars, fats and/or salt.
- Designing and supporting the implementation of social programmes that not only facilitate access to sufficient quantities of food, but also consider the nutritional quality and diversity of these foods.

B. Regulating food marketing, advertising and information

29. Advertising plays an important role in guiding consumer preferences for certain foods.²⁴ The food industry invests substantial resources to promote food products, including those high in fat, sugar or salt, especially aimed at children and young people. Greater public efforts must be made to prioritize the right to adequate and healthy diets for this population group, given that it covers a critical age for physical and cognitive development and for developing lifelong healthy eating habits.²⁵

30. FAO offers its member countries technical assistance in areas such as:

- Facilitating dialogue between actors, the exchange of experiences and generation of scientific evidence related to regulatory instruments for food labeling, so that labels are

²¹ ECLAC. 2019. *Social Panorama of Latin America, 2018*. Santiago.

²² In an exercise carried out in Chile, Cuadrado and García (2015) show that a food basket that meets nutritional criteria would be 36 percent more expensive than the existing basic food basket, which would imply that more than a quarter of the population could not access a food basket with those characteristics. For more information see: FAO and PAHO, 2017. *Op. cit.*

²³ FAO, PAHO, WFP and UNICEF. 2018. *Op. cit.*

²⁴ Popkin, B., and Reardon, T. 2018. *Op. cit.*

²⁵ PAHO 2015. *Ultra-processed food and beverages in Latin America: Trends, effect on obesity and implications for public policies*. Washington, DC.

clear, simple and easy to understand, in order to inform consumers and protect particularly vulnerable population groups, with respect to the consumption of products high in sugars, fats and salt.

- Supporting the design and implementation of measures that discourage the promotion and sale of food products high in sugars, fats and/or salt, especially in school environments and places where children and young people develop.
- Promoting public-private partnerships for the development and use of digital technologies that facilitate truthful and easily understandable information for different groups of consumers about the composition and nutritional value of food.

C. Stimulating the development of healthy and responsible eating habits

31. Food and nutrition education promote healthy eating habits providing the necessary skills so that people can eat well, thereby improving their health and nutrition and that of their families, hence contributing to the progressive realization of the right to adequate food. For food and nutrition education to be effective, the systemic nature of food environments and food systems must be recognized.

32. FAO offers its member countries technical assistance by:

- Developing policy instruments that contribute to the promotion of a change in behaviour towards healthier diets through food and nutrition education, communication strategies and school programmes such as school gardens. These tools can incorporate indigenous and traditional foods of different ethnic groups, as well as their preparations differentiated by territories, to promote healthy diets that incorporate these foods at the individual, family and community level.
- Strengthening food programmes by integrating food and nutrition education in the academic curriculum so that the entire school community develops the necessary skills for practicing healthy diets.
- Creating environments that promote the choice of healthier food options and capacity building at the individual and institutional level to adopt food and nutritional practices that promote good health. School environments are particularly critical to ensure healthy eating habits, but it is also necessary to develop these actions in health and employment centres, among others.
- Participating in the design and training related to new technological instruments such as mobile apps or the use of social networks to improve food and nutrition education and promote healthy diets in different age groups (children, youth, heads of household, etc.).

III. Cross-cutting elements for the transformation of food systems

33. Today, food systems need to be significantly transformed in order to be able to feed future generations in a healthy and sustainable way. This transformation necessarily involves a new form of governance that manages to provide a clearer understanding of how policy interventions interact, identifying ways to amplify synergies and reduce trade-offs, balancing the interests of all actors involved, and signalling where public interest will have to play a more important role to respect, protect and fulfil the right of all people to adequate food and health. To this end, the participation of member countries in the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit provides an opportunity to promote a comprehensive, high-quality and evidence-based dialogue that drives policies, regulations

and strategies towards the achievement of sustainable food systems for healthy diets and improved nutrition.

34. Member countries should develop the capabilities and resources consistent with this challenge. Firstly, it is necessary to develop a new institutional framework to address this multisectoral issue, including the participation of multiple actors with different interests. New analytical frameworks, such as those being developed to support the Hand in Hand Initiative and the preparatory process for the Food Systems Summit 2021, can help to identify key trade-offs and institutional bottlenecks, and lead to better targeting of investment and innovation, including policy and institutional change. In addition, human and financial resources are needed to bring about the necessary policies and investments. And, finally, an ambitious drive in research, information-gathering and analysis is needed to provide more evidence on the interrelationships between different forms of malnutrition and food systems, and their possible solutions.

III.1 Governance: Towards a renewed institutional framework through improved coordination and participation

35. LAC has developed a broad and innovative institutional framework to deal with problems related to hunger and malnutrition, which is often supported in different countries through constitutional and legal systems. These secretariats, councils, commissions and other entities could be restructured to incorporate the relevant sectors and actors in the operation of food systems.

36. The coordination of interventions is necessary to address the multiple causes and consequences of malnutrition. In this regard, it is essential that the agricultural, industry, trade, health, education, science and technology sectors, as well as intermediate and municipal governments, act in a coordinated manner. A food systems approach requires the participation of a range of actors such as food producers, traders, processors, wholesalers, retailers, urban planners, consumers and legislators, among others.

37. This participation should reach from production to food consumption, and do so in an inclusive manner through a rights-based approach.

38. On this cross-cutting issue, FAO offers member countries technical assistance such as:

- Providing technical advice for the promotion and strengthening of coordination mechanisms and participation in decision-making with governmental (national and subnational), parliamentary and non-governmental actors (private sector, civil society, including producer groups, women's and youth organizations, indigenous groups, consumers, research centres and academia).
- Strengthening urban/rural links, with a focus on working with intermediate governments to promote functional territories²⁶ and healthy food environments for vulnerable populations. In addition, FAO can help develop an urban agenda for healthy diets, generating spaces for research and exchange between countries on successful policies, including representatives of academia, and facilitating inclusive and intersectoral dialogues.
- Supporting the development and implementation of national food-based dietary guidelines to align efforts towards healthy diets considering the national context from production to consumption.

²⁶ A set of geographically continuous municipalities (communes, districts, cantons or any other terminology to identify the basic unit of the political-administrative organization), within which is carried out a high proportion of the economic and social interactions between its inhabitants, their organizations and their companies. Berdegué, J., Jara, B., Fuentealba, R., Tohá, J., Modrego, F., Schejtman, A., & Bro, N., 2011. Territorios Funcionales en Chile, Documento de trabajo 102, Rimisp, Centro Latinoamericano para el Desarrollo Rural.

III.2 Investments and capacities

39. The policy instruments that have been designed in recent years to address, for example, the problems of overweight and obesity, need both public and private resources for their implementation. Similarly, new capabilities are required to understand the causes of different forms of malnutrition and their relationship with food systems, and the possible policy options to address them.

40. FAO offers its member countries technical assistance in areas such as:

- Designing the policies and programmes indicated in Section II of this document, including the estimation of the necessary investments for nutrition-sensitive agriculture programmes.
- Developing training courses in partnership with other specialized institutions on emerging issues related to healthy diets and food systems, including digital technologies, mobile apps and other innovative instruments.

III.3 Monitoring and measurement for decision-making

41. The nutritional status of a population can vary considerably according to age, sex, ethnicity, geography and income. Therefore, collecting disaggregated, reliable and regular information allows timely decision-making, accountability, and facilitates the design of differentiated interventions capable to effectively address the needs of the most vulnerable groups and individuals and the measurement of the effects of the food system on diets and nutritional status of vulnerable groups as well as of the entire population.

42. FAO offers its member countries technical assistance in areas such as:

- Strengthening systems for monitoring hunger and food insecurity in the region. In particular, FAO can provide technical assistance to develop national capacities to measure food insecurity (through the adoption and use of the Food Insecurity Experience Scale²⁷), and tools to support monitoring of diets and nutrition such as food composition tables, diet quality indicators, supply utilization accounts and/or harmonization of food consumption data.
- Monitoring and evaluating the policies indicated in Section II, using tools to measure their evolution over time.
- Supporting the identification and promotion of public-private partnerships to use new digital technologies for data collection, generating statistics, and analysis related to food origin, nutritional value, safety, quality, consumer behaviour and food consumption patterns.

43. FAO recommends countries to invest in actions and strategies that seek to integrate and promote synergies between the three lines of action²⁸ proposed for the Regional Conference; towards food and agricultural systems that ensure healthy eating, as well as sustainable and climate-resilient production, while including the poorest and most vulnerable, generating employment and reducing inequality in rural areas. FAO offers to support member countries to promote integrated strategies based on these principles and to support the achievement of the SDGs.

²⁷ The Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) is one of the indicators used for the measurement of hunger in SDG 2.

²⁸ LARC/20/2 "Transforming food systems for healthy diets for all", LARC/20/3 "Hand-in-Hand towards prosperous and inclusive rural societies" and LARC/20/4 "Sustainable and climate resilient agriculture".

44. Regarding the goal of healthy diets for all, FAO offers assistance to countries to achieve the following SDGs:

SDG 2	Zero Hunger
2.1	<i>By 2030 access by all to safe nutritious food</i>
2.2	<i>By 2030 end all forms of malnutrition</i>
2.3	<i>By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment</i>
2.a	<i>Increase investment, including through enhanced international cooperation, in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services, technology development and plant and livestock gene banks in order to enhance agricultural productive capacity in developing countries, in particular least developed countries</i>
2.b	<i>Correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets, including through the parallel elimination of all forms of agricultural export subsidies and all export measures with equivalent effect, in accordance with the mandate of the Doha Development Round</i>
2.c	<i>Adopt measures to ensure the proper functioning of food commodity markets to help limit extreme food price volatility</i>
SDG 5	Gender Equality
5.1	<i>End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere</i>
SDG 9	Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
9.3	<i>Increase the access of small-scale industrial and other enterprises, in particular in developing countries, to financial services, including affordable credit, and their integration into value chains and markets</i>
SDG 12	Responsible Consumption and Production
12.3	<i>By 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses</i>

45. As part of its transformation into a more dynamic, responsive, effective and efficient organization, FAO offers innovative support to countries in the implementation of the work programme described in this document. Today, member countries, rural societies and the agricultural and food systems of the region are very different from what they were in the 1970s and 1980s, when FAO's presence in the countries and its modus operandi were established. To maximize this presence, and increase the effectiveness and impact of its support for Members in the regional context, FAO seeks to adopt a model that emphasizes:²⁹

- (a) Achieving results in innovations, policies and investments that lead to outcomes and impacts at a scale consistent with countries' ambitions to comply with the SDGs;
- (b) Working in a more programmatic way and organizing its staff in multidisciplinary teams to integrate policies, norms, knowledge, operations and investment support for member countries;
- (c) Strengthening the operational and implementation capacities of decentralized offices in the member countries, particularly those that are experiencing rapid growth in their budgets and work plans;
- (d) Collaboration and partnerships, mobilizing the capacities of the governments of the region, the private sector, civil society, academia and research institutes in the context of the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, including the development of strategic alliances, and South-South and Triangular Cooperation;

²⁹ See LARC/20/8 "Improving FAO's capacities to serve member countries in Latin America and the Caribbean".

- (e) Developing capabilities to perform high-quality strategic analysis, monitoring, evaluation, knowledge management and responsibility;
- (f) Maintaining the positive growth trend in the mobilization of resources to better serve member countries.