

Committee on World Food Security event on Investments for Healthy Food Systems

9 May 2017, FAO Headquarters

Chair's Summary

1. This event was part of a series of events to “develop common understanding of issues and lay the basis for informed CFS policy convergence work” on nutrition and food systems, called for by the strategy “*CFS engagement in advancing nutrition*” approved by CFS 43.
2. The theme was proposed by the CFS Open Ended Working Group on Nutrition (OEWG), based on the UNSCN Discussion Paper on the topic. The event represented one of many CFS activities contributing to the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025)¹ and to the implementation of the Second International Conference on Nutrition’s (ICN2) Framework for Action², where Member States committed to increase investments for effective interventions to improve people’s diets and nutrition, and to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
3. The event highlighted the opportunities and constraints that different food systems offer for interventions for improved nutrition and human health by providing both a theoretical analytical framework as well as concrete examples of how different stakeholders addressed the issue of healthier food systems through specific investments in different contexts.
4. The event contributed to reaching a greater understanding of potential areas for priority action to strengthen efforts to make food systems more oriented to nutritional outcomes, also by emphasizing implications for other sectors by discussing linkages, tensions and trade-offs.
5. The lessons that were presented, including challenges and constraints, the key messages that were shared, the comments that were submitted during the day can be synthesized in the following points:
 - a. Food systems are complex and diverse. They are continuously and rapidly changing as they are subject to important external influences such as population growth, climate change and urbanization. All need to be taken into account when analyzing food systems at national and local levels and identifying paths for increasing their positive impact on nutrition.
 - b. In this dynamic context the (changing) roles and position of women should be taken into account while planning for better nutrition outcomes.
 - c. A multi-sectoral approach to improved food systems is important as such systems are a strategic point of contact and constitute a valid “lens” for analyzing the complex interaction of many public policies in addition to agriculture, starting with health but also including urban and rural planning, education, transport and logistics, environment, and economic-growth.
 - d. It was emphasized that food systems are not themselves good or bad, healthy or unhealthy. They represent a factor among many to improve nutrition outcomes. They do contribute though to more or less desirable outcomes for nutrition as well as other social goals. However currently food

¹ UNGA Resolution, A/70/L.42

² ICN2 2014/3 Corr.1

systems, despite the important achievements, including in the fight to end hunger, do not sufficiently deliver these healthy diets as all countries in the world suffer from at least one form of malnutrition

- e. Government policies play a major role in influencing whether agriculture and food systems contribute to healthy diets and improved nutrition. As underscored by the Brazilian case presented, government approaches at national and sub-national levels, are important to address the complexities of food systems and of investing in them for better nutrition outcomes. Additionally, linking school feeding programmes to small agricultural producers can bring positive synergies. Government expenditure in infrastructure can support better agriculture investment and enhanced nutritional outcomes.
- f. It was stressed that the private sector and farmers are a key partner in this endeavor. Strategically formulated government policies can catalyze support from the private sector to make positive contributions, as highlighted by the Cote d'Ivoire case presented, including in the use of technology for healthier food. This case also highlighted the importance of dealing with the changing habits of consumers and how to use fortified food for improved nutrition.
- g. It was also underscored how civil society's role can be of essence in indicating sustainable practices, including traditional cultural ones based on ancestral values and agro-ecology as highlighted by the Guatemala case described and messages based on the right to healthy foods, that guide consumers to make good choices.
- h. Public investments in food systems should be aligned with other social goals. Too often, agricultural and industrial policies ignore their social and health implications. Government has a responsibility to increase social well-being and should align investment policies toward that end.
- i. A multistakeholder approach bringing together all actors within a particular food system is of crucial importance to identify useful investments and maximize their effectiveness for better nutrition.
- j. Education and capacity building of relevant actors in the food system, as well as communities' engagement, play an important role in understanding local food systems and identifying nutrition gaps and their causes as well as elements in the system that could be targeted for investments for healthier outcomes. As the experience of the City of Turin underscored, it is important to support local small producers as well as shorten the link between producers and consumers, referred to as "co-producers" in this example.
- k. Better diets are possible as every food system has the capacity to produce the healthy food that is needed for good nutrition and human health. Food system investments need to be tailored to specific contexts. Investment decisions should take into account food system variations and learn from other experiences.
- l. Investments have a higher pay-off when enabling conditions are present, and when interventions reinforce one another by creating multiple types of capital (human, financial, physical).
- m. Significant gaps remain and need to be closed in the knowledge available to countries and investors about how to select among the investment choices and which to prioritize for a given food

system and nutrition context. A specific role could be played by development banks and other financial institutions that could provide contextualized financial information to better identify promising investments that improve nutrition and health.

- n. There is a need for more evidence on the link between food systems and nutrition outcomes, specifically where several issues are involved at the same time: health, productivity, profitability and sustainability.
 - o. The need for an environmental focus of investments in food systems emerged in the event's discussions, as did the concern that food systems need to cater for a growing global population.
6. The audience was reminded that this event is a step of a process that could be built upon in the way to possible policy convergence work. It was recalled that CFS 44 will have on 10 October a "nutrition day" that will represent a further contribution to this process and that a FSN Forum *call for examples and good practices on investments for healthy food systems* is open now.
7. The OEWG Chair concluded by thanking UNSCN for its partnership in this event, the moderator of the Forum, Ms. Carin Smaller from IISD, the author of the background paper, Dr. Rachel Nugent, the four panelists, Marie Konaté, Lilian Rahal, Antonio Gonzales and Andrea Pezzana and all participants that intervened in the course of the day as well as the CFS Secretariat, which organized the event.