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## Economic and Social Council

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**Implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations  
conferences and summits**

### UN-Nutrition

#### Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour of submitting to the Economic and Social Council the report of UN-Nutrition, pursuant to Council decision 2018/207.



## Report of UN-Nutrition\*

[in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish]

### I. The state of world's nutrition

1. Malnutrition covers a large spectrum of physical manifestations that can occur separately or concomitantly. It includes undernutrition (wasting, stunting and underweight), symptoms and diseases caused by vitamin and mineral deficiencies (vitamin A, iron and iodine being the most important), overweight and obesity, as well as the resulting diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Malnutrition reduces cognitive capacity and productivity and slows economic growth, which can perpetuate a cycle of poverty.

2. Good nutrition relies on interlinked systems related to the production, availability of and access to nutritious foods, the protection of ecosystems and the environment, the delivery of quality health care and sanitation, education, employment and income, access to cropland, and social protection. When these interlinked systems do not function effectively or there are inequalities in access to them, malnutrition results, in all its forms.

3. Even before the pandemic, the world was lagging on achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 of ending hunger and malnutrition. Around 3 billion people around the globe were unable to afford a healthy diet in 2019.<sup>1</sup>

4. According to the most recent global data available for 2020, which do not yet capture the likely negative effects of COVID-19, 149.2 million children under the age of five were stunted (SDG indicator 2.1.1), of which three-quarters lived in just two regions – Central and Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. This shocking statistic is echoed in the 45.4 million children of similar age (6.7 percent) who suffered from wasting in 2020.<sup>2</sup>

5. Child undernutrition is closely connected to women's and girls' nutritional status, which not only impacts their general health and well-being, but also the conditions and outcome of pregnancy. Iron deficiency anaemia, for example, affected nearly one in three (29.9 percent) women of reproductive age (SDG Indicator 2.2.3) globally in 2019, indicating no progress since 2012. One in seven babies globally (14.6 percent) was born with a low birthweight in 2015 (the most recent data available).<sup>3</sup> Low birth weight is closely associated with foetal and neonatal mortality. Those who survive may well suffer from inhibited growth, stunting, impaired cognitive development and NCDs later in life.

6. Furthermore, 38.9 million (5.7 percent) under-fives suffered overweight in 2020. Little change has been observed at global level in two decades and rising trends are found in some regions. Adult obesity also continues to rise and more than 40 percent of all women and men (2.2 billion people) are estimated to be overweight or obese.<sup>4</sup>

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\* The present report is being issued without formal editing.

<sup>1</sup> FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP & WHO (2019), *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World: Safeguarding Against Economic Slowdowns and Downturns*, Rome.

<sup>2</sup> FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP & WHO (2021), *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World: Transforming Food Systems for Food Security, Improved Nutrition and Affordable Healthy Diets for All*, Rome.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

7. Undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and overweight and obesity are observed together in the same countries and communities, even in the same households. This is known as the double or triple burden of malnutrition.

8. Although empirical data on the impact of COVID-19 on nutritional outcomes are still being collected, the economic, social, food- and health-system disruptions caused as a result of the pandemic have likely exacerbated undernutrition in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

### ***1.1 Ensuring UN System-wide coherence on nutrition at all levels and coordinated support for Member States***

9. Countries around the world are struggling to maintain the functioning of the multiple and interlinked systems needed to ensure good nutrition to their people while responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and tackling other developmental challenges. Governments benefit from coherent and coordinated United Nations (UN) support to maintain and scale up their efforts. UN Nutrition is the new entity uniting the former United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN) and the United Nations Network for the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement.<sup>5</sup>

10. UN Nutrition's vision is a world without malnutrition where everyone, everywhere enjoys all human rights. To fulfil this vision, UN Nutrition's mission is to coordinate and leverage the response of UN agencies to address malnutrition in all its forms, along with its root causes.

11. UN Nutrition aims to enhance global and country-level coordination on nutrition for all UN Members, while in countries of the SUN movement, UN Nutrition also acts as the United Nations network for the SUN Movement.

12. In January 2021, World Health Organization (WHO) Assistant Director-General for Universal Health Coverage/Healthier Populations became the first UN Nutrition Chair, with a two-year mandate. UN Nutrition consists of a seven-member Steering Committee comprised of the global nutrition chiefs of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and WHO.

13. At the global level, UN Nutrition comprises members from 13 United Nations System entities, one associate member and two observers,<sup>6</sup> with more United Nations agencies joining at country level. UN Nutrition Members provide financial support a secretariat, led by an Executive Secretary.

14. By decision 2018/207, ECOSOC requested that the former UNSCN report on its activities on an annual basis.<sup>7</sup> Following this decision, UN Nutrition assumed

<sup>5</sup> For background and information on UN Nutrition, please see: [Note from the Secretary General to the 2021 session of the ECOSOC](#).

<sup>6</sup> FAO, IAEA, IFAD, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UNEP, UNICEF, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), UN Women, WFP and WHO. CGIAR, through the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, is an associate member. The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) Secretariat and the Global Nutrition Cluster (GNC) are observers.

<sup>7</sup> [ECOSOC decision 2018/207](#).

UNSCN's annual reporting obligations to ECOSOC. This report recounts the work and collective achievements of UN Nutrition in 2021.

## **II. Towards ensuring good nutrition for all and leaving no one behind: collective actions undertaken by UN Nutrition Members in 2021**

15. In 2021, UN Nutrition Members developed the UN Nutrition Strategy 2022–2030. To inform its development, they consulted with country, regional and global United Nations staff through an online survey in English, French, Spanish, Russian and Arabic, from 7 September to 21 October 2021. In addition, conversations were held with key informants from five stakeholder groups: (1) Resident Coordinators, (2) experts and (3) civil-society and private-sector partners, and the nutrition focal points of governments from (4) SUN and (5) non-SUN countries.

16. The UN Nutrition Strategy 2022–2030 informs the vision, mission and guiding principles of the collective work of UN Nutrition Members. It also identifies the following three interlinked areas of joint work:

1. strategic and coherent support for governments;
2. the effective management of collective knowledge; and
3. joint advocacy and communications.

17. The UN Nutrition Strategy 2022–2030 aligns with the objectives of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025) and with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A review process is envisaged in mid-2025, which will inform the remaining period (2026–2030). The Strategy will guide the development of complementary biennial workplans to specify priority actions to be undertaken jointly by UN Nutrition Members, supported by the Secretariat.

18. Throughout 2021, UN Nutrition Members worked as a collective as described below.

### ***II.1 Priority 1 – Strategic engagement with one voice in key global processes***

19. Halfway through the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025), the international nutrition community designated 2021 the Year of Action on Nutrition. Some of the key global processes of relevance to nutrition that took place in 2021 were the UN Food Systems Summit, the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties on Climate Change (COP26) and the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit. There were also three plenary sessions of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) (CFS47, CFS48 and CFS49).

20. UN Nutrition Members prioritized coordinated and unified engagement in all of these events. UN Nutrition Members also made efforts to ensure that governments, UN Country Teams and other stakeholders were actively engaged in these processes.

21. **CFS:** Hosted by FAO in Rome, CFS comprises 133 United Nations Member States. UN Nutrition is represented on the CFS multi-stakeholder Advisory Group. The forty-seventh session of the Committee in February 2021 endorsed the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition (VGFSyN), the result of an intensive and inclusive five-year multi-stakeholder consultation process. UN Nutrition provided an efficient coordination platform for the mobilization and

facilitation of input of 10 agencies<sup>8</sup> that formed a Technical Task Team, supporting Members' deliberations with coherent UN System-wide technical positions and evidence-based advice.

22. UN Nutrition was represented with a common voice at the CFS forty-seventh session and CFS forty-eighth special session (June 2021), as well as at other events organized by the CFS, highlighting the CFS as a positive and efficient example of UN System-wide coherent support of Members' negotiations through UN Nutrition.

23. UN Nutrition disseminated the CFS VGFSyN to technical staff at regional and country level, encouraging its use in conjunction with other evidence-based UN guidelines and recommendations.

24. UN Nutrition co-organized four well-attended virtual side events at the CFS forty-eighth and forty-ninth sessions. Their engagement with non-UN partners at these events amplified the key messages and bolstered their outreach to a much larger audience to raise the awareness of and to advocate for action to improve nutrition:

- Shaping the future of the food systems for the youth,<sup>9</sup> co-organized by the SUN Movement Food Systems Summit (FSS) Youth Coalition, SUN Business Network, SUN Civil Society Network and UN Nutrition, supported by the European Commission (DG INTPA) and Canada, on 8 June;
- Transforming Food, Land and Water Systems for Sustainable Healthy Diets,<sup>10</sup> co-organized by UN Nutrition, Stanford University, WorldFish, the Environmental Defense Fund, CGIAR and the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) on 11 October;
- Healthy Diets at the Nexus of Food System, Biodiversity, Climate and Nutrition: Global Summits, Local Transformation and the CFS VGFSyN,<sup>11</sup> co-organized by UN Nutrition Secretariat, WFP, FAO and the World Bank (Agriculture and Food Global Practice) on 12 October;
- Human Rights, Nutrition and Law: Keys to Transform Food Systems,<sup>12</sup> co-organized by Laval University, WHO, UNICEF, the International Development Law Organization (IDLO), FAO and the UN Nutrition Secretariat on 13 October.

25. **UNFSS:** The UN Secretary-General called the UN Food Systems Summit as the first people's summit, with the aim of setting the stage for global food-systems transformation to achieve the SDGs by 2030. The Summit was held virtually on 23 September 2021, during the UN General Assembly in New York, following a two-year preparation process and many consultation processes to identify game-changing solutions. The UN Food System Summit followed a three-day pre-summit in Rome, in July.

26. UN Nutrition set up a working group for the Food Systems Summit (UNFSS Nutrition WG) in March 2021, with representatives from 15 UN agencies,<sup>13</sup> to agree joint positions, a narrative and key message on the importance of ensuring healthy diets from sustainable food systems as the outcome of food-systems transformation. The working group also agreed on mechanisms to boost visibility. These included

<sup>8</sup> FAO, WHO, WFP, UNICEF, UNEP, UNOCHA, IFAD, IAEA, UNHCR and the Alliance Bioversity-CIAT.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I4cb7f09aCI>.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JT98dYOrXq4>.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Z4U8IQH8qc>.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVKnEQko77U>.

<sup>13</sup> FAO, IFAD, IMO, UNCDF, UNDESA, UNDP, UNEP, UNFCCC, UN Habitat, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNOCHA, GEF, WFP and WHO.

having UN Nutrition represented in the Food System Summit Countdown and wider social-media campaign and in independent dialogues.

27. UN Nutrition was also represented in the UN Food System Summit independent dialogue on *Transforming food systems with aquatic foods – access to sustainable, safe, and nutritious food for all*<sup>14</sup> on 30 April, co-organized by the Global Action Network, Sustainable Food from the Oceans and Inland Waters for Food Security and Nutrition, and WorldFish. The aim of this dialogue was to explore the actions needed to drive aquatic food solutions as part of the UN Food System Summit. UN Nutrition called attention to the crucial role of aquatic foods in sustainable healthy diets, based on the UN Nutrition discussion paper<sup>15</sup> on the topic.

28. IFAD, in collaboration with the Wageningen Center for Development Innovation, convened a dialogue on the nexus between climate change and nutrition for improving human and planetary health. IFAD has also been actively leading and participating in wide-ranging dialogues on several topics related to rural agriculture, most notably, small-scale farmers, indigenous peoples, gender equity, youth and finance-related issues, particularly around the question of access.

29. UN Nutrition supported the organization of the UNFSS Pre-Summit UN-Nutrition Affiliated Session: Putting Nutrition at the Centre of Food Systems Transformation.<sup>16</sup> The session advocated for a food-systems transformation with people at its heart and with nutrition outcomes as its principal measure of success. The jointly developed key messages were successfully delivered on this and several other occasions.

30. Importantly, UN Nutrition actively promoted the UN Food System Summit to UN Country Teams by preparing and sharing updates and communications materials and by supporting Food System's National Dialogues in collaboration with UN teams and the SUN Movement Secretariat, ensuring nutrition was featured strongly.

31. **COP 26:** The governments of the United Kingdom and Italy hosted the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow from 31 October to 12 November 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic brought new emphasis on the need to accelerate action on the nexus between climate change, nutrition and food systems, demonstrating the fragility of the food system and ecosystem.

32. The joint messages developed by the UN Food System Summit Nutrition WG were tailored to COP26 and used to raise awareness of the linkages between nutrition and climate change.

33. UN Nutrition Members co-organized multiple side events. Country and/or city representatives from around the globe contributed to all:

- Achieving Healthy Diets from Sustainable Blue Food Systems in Small Island Developing States<sup>17</sup> on 2 November at the WHO Health Pavilion. The event was co-organized by WHO, EAT and Stanford University, with FAO moderating the event on behalf of UN Nutrition.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.cgiar.org/news-events/event/transforming-food-systems-with-aquatic-foods-access-to-sustainable-safe-and-nutritious-food-for-all/>.

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.unnutrition.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-UN-Nutrition-Aquatic-foods-Paper\\_EN\\_.pdf](https://www.unnutrition.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-UN-Nutrition-Aquatic-foods-Paper_EN_.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.unnutrition.org/news/un-fss-pre-summit-affiliated-session-putting-nutrition-at-the-centre-of-food-systems-transformation/>.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OqzqnYRRZuY&t=25615s>.

- A round table to tackle climate, environment, nutrition and health on 9 November at the WHO Health Pavilion, co-organized by Switzerland, WFP and WHO, supported and moderated by the UN Nutrition Secretariat.
- *Diets, Climate and Nature: The role of what we eat in a 1.5o C future. Part 1 – Balancing nature restoration, biodiversity conservation and healthy diets for all* on 10 November at the WWF Pavilion, co-organized by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), the World Business Council for Sustainable Development and UN Nutrition.

34. UN Nutrition was also represented on several other opportunities, bringing nutrition to the forefront of discussions. UN Nutrition Members organized other nutrition-related events in the WHO and IFAD pavilions. For example, IFAD, in collaboration with WFP, co-organized an event that explored the nexus of climate change, conflict and malnutrition. IFAD further organized a dedicated event, *FOODtalk on healthy planet and well-nourished people*. FAO held two nutrition-related pre-COP26 side events, spotlighting the links between biodiversity and nutrition in the context of climate change.

35. As a result, food and nutrition featured more prominently in discussions among the climate change community. However, food and nutrition were not addressed during formal negotiations.

36. N4G: The Government of Japan convened the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit 2021 on 7 and 8 December 2021. The event convened a cross section of stakeholders to accelerate action and investment for nutrition, mobilizing more than US\$27 billion and nearly 400 commitments. UN Nutrition was deeply involved, with FAO, WFP, UNICEF, WHO and the Secretariat acting in the Advisory Group supporting the Government of Japan. FAO, WHO and WFP co-organized the N4G sessions focused on healthy diets, health and resilience respectively.

37. UN Nutrition country teams played essential roles in mobilizing and assisting governments from LMICs in formulating their commitments. This effort was supported by coordinated advocacy and technical assistance at the global level from the N4G Outreach Group which included Several UN Nutrition members including UNICEF, WFP and WHO, as well as the secretariat.

38. In the high-level segment of the Summit, the Principals of FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WHO and WFP made ambitious commitments outlining how their agencies will contribute towards the goal of ending malnutrition over the next 5 years. In addition, the UN Nutrition Chair underlined UN Nutrition's commitment to N4G in a video message.

39. Leading up to the N4G Summit, the UN Nutrition UNFSS WG was reconvened to further tailor joint key messages for N4G use. Furthermore, UN Nutrition supported the N4G constituency communications subgroup.

40. To build momentum towards N4G, as well as to advance the implementation of its outcomes, the Government of Japan encouraged stakeholders to host official side events before and after the Summit. UN Nutrition contributed to many of these events, as (co-)organizers, moderators and speakers, or by providing support.

## ***II.2 Priority 2 – strategic and joint support for strengthening country nutrition action***

41. Governments have prime responsibility for designing, planning, implementing, and monitoring policies, programmes and actions to improve nutrition in ways that respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of their populations. The UN agencies

coming together and coordinating action through the UN Nutrition mechanism places specific emphasis on strengthening national capacity to act, including by fostering good governance in relation to nutrition.

42. The coordination provided by the UN Nutrition also supports governments at various levels, ensuring linkages and feedback loops. First, the agencies comprising UN Nutrition provide global support by developing evidence-based normative guidance and technical guidelines, and through coordination across agencies facilitate agreement on binding or voluntary instruments and connect countries to global processes. Second, UN Nutrition Members deliver direct technical assistance and capacity-building. The collective role of UN Nutrition Members is to ensure coherence, so that the work of UN agencies in a given country is strategic and effective, pursuing advocacy with one voice and deploying joint assistance whenever possible. To disseminate the common nutrition message UN Nutrition reached out as a collective to UN Resident Coordinators (UNRCs) to support their engagement in national nutrition agendas.

43. According to United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/279, the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF)<sup>18</sup> is the instrument for planning and implementing UN development activities at country level and ensuring UN System-wide coherence in support of the 2030 Agenda. The UNSDCF guides the entire programme cycle, driving planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of collective UN support and contributions in the country and shaping the configuration of the UN assets required, both inside and outside the country. The UN Nutrition Secretariat conducted an analysis of UNSDCFs' renewals and new activities to assess how nutrition was reflected. Based on this analysis and further insights from UN Nutrition members at the country level, the UN Nutrition Secretariat is supporting the development of the Guidance Note on Mainstreaming Nutrition in UNSDCFs<sup>19</sup> to leverage all available entry points for improving nutrition.

44. The UN Nutrition members continued meaningful national level support for nutrition in 2021. This included efforts to embed nutrition in ongoing food-systems transformation and the climate change agenda.

45. Strong collaboration between UN agencies and the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Nigeria, for instance, helped to position nutrition in the nation's food systems transformational approach, from its FSS dialogues to its ensuing vision of *National Pathways to Food Systems Transformation*. In this case, the Office of the Resident Coordinator headed up the technical and financial support that various United Nations agencies (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO) provided to the government for mainstreaming nutrition into FSS dialogue and served as a member of the national food systems core team. The United Nations agencies, furthermore, ensured that the discussions covered the full spectrum of nutrition issues the country is facing (undernutrition, overweight and obesity, and micronutrient deficiencies), positioning nutrition as an integral part of all six action clusters in the national pathway.

46. In Costa Rica, the United Nations agencies promoted healthy eating practices, including through planet-friendly approaches. FAO assisted multiple ministries with the formulation of national food-based dietary guidelines (FBDGs), complementing WHO-supported public health campaigns to curb diet-related NCDs and UNICEF's work to combat child overweight and obesity. In July 2021, the country released its

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<sup>18</sup> Previously known as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

<sup>19</sup> As an update of the UNSCN Guidance Note on Integration of Nutrition in the UNDAFs, available at <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/UNDAFguidance-EN-WEB.pdf>.

first-ever FBDGs for the critical 1000-day period from conception to a child's second birthday, emphasizing the importance of breastfeeding from a nutritional and environmental perspective. FAO also supported the government with efforts to devise FBDGs for the wider population, to be finalized in 2022, which incorporate dietary recommendations encompassing the three dimensions of sustainability – economic, environmental and societal. UN Nutrition newsletters gave visibility to these country success stories, also supporting peer learning.

47. In Chad, Liberia, Lesotho, Madagascar, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo and Zimbabwe, UN Nutrition facilitators and the Secretariat provided support for data collection and analysis (such as UN Nutrition action inventories and stakeholder mapping), as well as the formulation and submission of N4G commitments.

48. UN Nutrition Members' country support in 2021 also included the dissemination of the CFS VGFSyN and assistance to bolster their uptake. To that end, FAO developed the Evidence Platform for Agrifood Systems and Nutrition, with inputs from UN Nutrition Members and the support of the Secretariat. The platform provides evidence and key tools to support Governments and stakeholders in utilizing the voluntary guidelines.

### ***II.3 Priority 3 – Support for the SUN Movement as “One UN”***

49. The third phase of the SUN Movement was launched in 2021. In its role as the UN Network for the SUN Movement, UN Nutrition provided support in a unified way to the roll out of the SUN Movement Strategy for the third phase. UN Nutrition had two members on the SUN Executive Committee and played a pivotal role in the Operationalization group, which defined the pathway for putting SUN 3.0 into practice.

50. The UN Nutrition Secretariat participated in the development of SUN's global support system (GSS) workplan, indicators, budget and communications and advocacy strategies, as well as in the development of SUN's mutual accountability framework.

51. In 2021, the UN Nutrition Secretariat participated in the SUN Working Group on Monitoring Evaluation Accountability Learning (MEAL) and in the review and roll-out of the SUN Joint Annual Assessment process, which brings together in-country partners and stakeholders to reflect on progress made towards SUN's strategic objectives. The Secretariat also assisted SUN by contributing to various task teams, such as that on Food System Summit and N4G, to encourage countries to formulate N4G commitments and support related nutrition advocacy.

52. Thanks to their history of working together as a strong UN network, member agencies (FAO, UNICEF, WFP and WHO) mobilized efficiently in Cambodia to support the government and work jointly with other stakeholders and SUN networks on the successful execution of 26 UN Food System Summit dialogues at national and subnational level, covering multiple nutrition topics from food fortification to home-grown school feeding, the role of the private sector in improving nutrition and the global action plan for the prevention and treatment of wasting, among other things. Furthermore, their cohesive support and proximity (in FAO's case) to the SUN Country Coordinator, who also served as the Food System Summit National Convener, further sharpened the nutrition lens of the country's agenda for food systems transformation.

53. In Chad, four UN agencies – FAO, UNICEF, WFP and WHO – joined forces in a multisectoral programme, known as PRO-FORT, combining nutrition-sensitive agriculture, governance and behavioural change support. This joint programme builds

on the comparative advantages of diverse UN agencies and is a prime example of how UN Nutrition members collectively support government in local solutions to nutrition challenges. When stakeholders reflected on the experience at a knowledge capitalization workshop held in October 2021, they found that the project was successful in producing adequately fortified complementary food for young children and an enabling environment for recommended infant and young child feeding practices, while building capacity and stimulating the local economy.

54. The UN Nutrition Secretariat also supported and participated in the joint SUN-Global Nutrition Report roundtables for building momentum for the N4G Year of Action as well as SUN's cross-country learning and information-sharing efforts.

#### ***II.4 Priority 4 – Management of collective knowledge and communication Management of collective knowledge***

55. UN Nutrition's approach to knowledge management is based on making the best use of existing knowledge produced by members at all levels. Member engagement and ownership is imperative to ensuring quality, relevance, demand and alignment around knowledge products. A UN Nutrition Editorial Board was established in June 2021, comprising the UN Nutrition Executive Secretary as Editor in Chief and seven members from the Alliance of Bioversity and CIAT, IAEA, FAO, WFP, WHO, UN Habitat and UNICEF, who will serve through 2022. The Editorial Board members will provide content by writing articles or editorials, offer advice on potential peer reviews of submissions and conduct peer reviews, as needed.

56. Supported by the Editorial Board, UN Nutrition Members worked to identify emerging issues, support knowledge-sharing platforms and systems and generate new knowledge to fill gaps and needs.

##### *Identification of emerging issues*

57. Respondents to the online survey on the *UN Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016–2025: priority actions on nutrition for the next five years* indicated areas of concern that are very likely to have a negative impact on nutrition. These insights were reviewed by the Editorial Board and the UN Nutrition Steering Committee, culminating in the following list of emerging nutrition issues.

1. environmental and nutrition linkages
2. sustainable healthy diets
3. One Health
4. education for improving nutrition
5. accountability, corruption and governance, including private-sector engagement to improve nutrition.

58. This list was used throughout 2021 to inform UN Nutrition's work on knowledge management and will continue to guide it throughout 2022.

##### *Support for knowledge-sharing platforms and systems*

59. Under the new vision for the effective management of collective knowledge, the UN Nutrition Secretariat convenes and facilitates United Nations communities of practice (CoPs) to work on emerging issues that require the UN system's full attention and alignment, prior to sharing with a broader range of stakeholders. In 2021, the School Nutrition CoP continued its work on the United Nations inventory on school nutrition. The CoP discussed and supported the online knowledge hub of the FAO-

WFP project on *School food nutrition guidelines and standards for safeguarding children and adolescents' right to food* and the School Meals Coalition emanating from the UN Food System Summit.

60. Another example is the CoP on Nutrition, Human Rights and Law (NHRL), which is convened under the auspices of the Nutrition Technical Working Group of the IATF on NCDs. In 2021, this CoP reviewed its concept note, updated the inventory of publications and developed terms of reference for an ad hoc roster of experts on NHRL.

#### *Generation of new knowledge to fill gaps and needs*

61. Two new UN Nutrition knowledge products were published in 2021, aligned with the priorities identified by the emerging issue analysis, both in the area of sustainable healthy diets. The first focused on *The Role of Aquatic foods in sustainable healthy diets*,<sup>20</sup> released on 7 May at an event co-organized by UN Nutrition, FAO and World Fish. The second, *Livestock-derived foods and sustainable healthy diets*,<sup>21</sup> was launched on 9 June at the WHO Health Talks Week, at an event co-organized by UN Nutrition, WHO and ILRI.

#### *Joint advocacy and communication*

62. The aim of UN Nutrition joint advocacy and communication is to influence political and policy decisions in a broad range of sectors, to mainstream nutrition actions and ensure positive nutrition outcomes. Communicating key messages with one voice is, therefore, the foundation of UN Nutrition's advocacy communications.

63. To reach as many people as possible and to keep a regular dialogue going with its target audiences, UN Nutrition produces and disseminates newsletters and e-alerts and makes use of social media channels. At the end of 2021, 4,119 people had subscribed to UN Nutrition e-communications, a 20 percent increase on the previous year. UN Nutrition also approached approximately 10,000 Twitter followers (an 11 percent increase on the year) and 2,310 LinkedIn followers, a five-fold increase from 2020.

64. The UN Nutrition Secretariat developed and disseminated two newsletters (June<sup>22</sup> and December<sup>23</sup> 2021) including interviews, country stories, programme news from UN Nutrition Members, technical resources, events and more. In addition, it shared several e-alerts calling for contributions to the first issue of the UN Nutrition Journal, on CFS nutrition-related events, on nutrition at COP26 and on N4G. Throughout 2021, all of the global events mentioned in section II.1 presented important advocacy opportunities and were actively promoted through social media.

65. Another integral part of UN Nutrition's advocacy and communication efforts in 2021 was the active representation in events organized by other stakeholders, to amplify key messages and reach larger and new audiences. UN Nutrition was represented at a number of key High Level Events to increase the visibility of the newly formed coordination platform for UN agencies and emphasize the collective work of the members. Some examples include:

- The Announcement of the 2021 World Food Prize Laureate on 11 May, organized by the World Food Prize Foundation.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.unnutrition.org/news/launch-aquatic-foods/>.

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.unnutrition.org/news/launch-livestock-derived-foods/>.

<sup>22</sup> <https://mailchi.mp/unnutrition/newsletter-issue1-2021>.

<sup>23</sup> <https://mailchi.mp/unnutrition/newsletter-issue2-2021>.

- An event entitled *Implementing FAO's Strategic Framework 2022–31: Raising levels of nutrition for all*,<sup>24</sup> organized by FAO on 30 September, to engage countries and international organizations in a conversation on how to enhance FAO's work in nutrition to catalyse the achievement of the SDGs.
- On 8 June, the Standing Together for Nutrition Consortium webinar COVID-19 Recovery: Why investments in nutrition cannot wait,<sup>25</sup> as part of the WHO Food Systems Dialogues – Health Talks.
- The WHO Health Talks, on 10 June, the Accelerate Reduction Effort on Anaemia (AREA) CoP, in collaboration with Nutrition International and supported by UN Nutrition Secretariat, organized a webinar on Governance and Accountability for Food Fortification.<sup>26</sup>
- A webinar on Sustainable consumption and diet, climate change, biodiversity and health<sup>27</sup> on 1 October, organized by FoodTank.<sup>28</sup>

## ***II.5 Priority 5 – Support for the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025)***

66. Throughout 2021, the UN Nutrition Members continued to assist with the advancement of the Decade of Action on Nutrition.

67. The FAO/WHO Joint Secretariat coordinated a midterm review of the Nutrition Decade's, which benefited from robust input from all Members of UN Nutrition. The midterm review informed a workplan for 2021–2025, as presented in a foresight paper prepared by the Joint Secretariat, to support reaching WHA nutrition-related targets set for 2025.

68. Participants from all stakeholder groups provided feedback on the suggested plan, commenting on the proposed focus for priority action for each of the Action Areas of the Nutrition Decade. They discussed cross-cutting actions that would facilitate interlinkages and synergies between the Nutrition Decade's Action Areas, as well as issues hampering the achievement of global nutrition targets and ways to address them. Participants could also provide anonymous feedback on the proposed action plan by way of a questionnaire. All information on the online consultation is available in six UN languages on the FSN Forum website.<sup>29</sup>

## ***II.6 Priority 6 – Engaging with strategic partners***

69. The nutrition ecosystem is complex, with a multitude of actors operating across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, from disaster risk reduction, early warning and humanitarian response to recovery, longer-term development efforts and resilience building. Myriad initiatives are under way, complementing each other, but sometimes overlapping.

70. UN Nutrition coordination supported identification of key engagement opportunities that could help strengthen the ecosystem while avoiding duplication.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.fao.org/events/detail/fao-strategic-framework-raising-levels-of-nutrition-for-all>.

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XRM8Z15OqNo>.

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.who.int/news-room/events/detail/2021/06/10/default-calendar/webinar-governance-and-accountability-for-food-fortification>.

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=98Qb2RSqTpY>.

<sup>28</sup> <https://foodtank.com/>.

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/>.

71. Within this context, UN Nutrition was represented as a collective at meetings of the Global Nutrition Cluster (GNC), participating in working groups on two thematic areas: the management of wasting and on cash and voucher assistance. In addition, UN Nutrition joined the GNC advocacy working group to help ensure consistency and coherence of messaging.

72. Engagement with Regional Economic Communities, in particular, the African Union, was considered a strategic priority. UN Nutrition supported the drafting of the joint call by heads of state for more resources for African Union 2022 work on nutrition at the thirty-fifth African Union Assembly, which took place in Ethiopia in February 2022.

73. Throughout 2021, UN Nutrition was represented in the One Planet Network Sustainable Food System Programme, acting as an observer at its Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Committee meetings.

### III. Selected actions by UN Nutrition Steering Committee members in 2021

74. In addition to working as a collective, UN Nutrition Members continued to make an effective contribution to food and nutrition improvements in 2021, working within their individual mandates and capacities. UN Nutrition, as a coordination platform, also supports each agencies' individual agenda by providing an opportunity for knowledge sharing and open communication for the efficient work of each agency in fulfilling its mandate. Some examples of work highlighted by each of the seven agencies that form the UN Nutrition Steering Committee included:

#### FAO

Ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition, including increasing access to affordable healthy diets, are at the core of FAO's mandate. In 2021, FAO's governing bodies endorsed the 2021–2025 Vision and Strategy for FAO's Work in Nutrition.<sup>30</sup> This corporate document supports FAO's Strategic Framework 2022–2031 through coordinated action towards one mission for nutrition: to tackle malnutrition in all its forms by accelerating impactful policies and actions across agrifood systems to enable healthy diets for all and to contribute to a vision for nutrition of a world where all people are eating healthy diets from efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems. Better nutrition, along with better production, a better environment and a better life – the “four Betters” – are the aspirations in FAO's Strategic Framework 2022–2031, aimed at supporting the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

FAO has contributed extensively to the international nutrition architecture and to advancing the global nutrition agenda. The Organization has, among other things, contributed to the policy convergence processes of the CFS work streams on food systems and nutrition, gender equality and women's empowerment and maintained the follow-up to the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) and the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025). FAO hosted the UN Food System Summit pre-summit and worked with the leadership team in support of the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy. FAO supported the Government of Japan as a member of the Advisory Board for the N4G Summit and was co-chair of the thematic Working Group on Food Systems for Healthy Diets. FAO also made ambitious and measurable pledges at the N4G Summit to meaningfully contribute to the realization of healthy diets from sustainable food systems. FAO played a crucial role in

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.fao.org/3/ne853en/ne853en.pdf>.

supporting the finalization of the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition (VGFSyN), endorsed at CFS47. In particular, FAO developed a platform to provide evidence and tools to support the uptake of the VGFSyN by governments and stakeholders and, thus, advance the transformation of the agrifood systems needed to achieve FAO's vision for nutrition.

## **IAEA**

IAEA is a specialized technical agency supporting the use of nuclear techniques in nutritional assessment. Results from a research project assessing protein quality from legumes were shared at a virtual meeting hosted by IAEA. The generated data on protein digestibility will feed into a future database on protein quality envisaged by FAO and inform dialogue on protein requirements over the life course. IAEA is part of the organizing committee for an International Symposium on Protein and Human Health planned for 2023. In a new research project, it is supporting eight research groups in assessing the interlinkages between protein quality and gut health.

A second new research project aims to optimize the isotope method for vitamin A assessment for use in population surveys, as it is the only practical assessment method that can be applied across the entire spectrum of vitamin A status. Key stakeholders in the vitamin A field gathered at a technical meeting to help guide the design of this new research project, to ensure the isotope method becomes more relevant to population assessments and programme evaluations.

IAEA continued to support 10 countries from Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean in evaluating the effectiveness of stunting reduction programmes that enhanced capacity to assess body composition and infant and young child feeding practices. Furthermore, in an IAEA-supported regional project, nine African countries obtained new information on the medium- and long-term nutritional and health outcomes associated with moderate or acute malnutrition in childhood.

## **IFAD**

IFAD is the only multilateral development institution focusing exclusively on transforming rural economies and food systems. With its unique identity as an international financial institution and a United Nations specialized agency, IFAD plays a key role in the international development arena in giving a voice to poor, small-scale farmers, producers, women, youth and indigenous peoples and ensuring none are left behind. IFAD also has a comparative advantage when it comes to climate change, in its unique mandate to enable rural people to achieve food and nutrition security by building remunerative, sustainable and resilient livelihoods that are market based and rooted in low-emission, climate-resilient development pathways.

IFAD has championed the FSS from the outset, particularly Track 4 on advancing equitable livelihoods and inclusive food systems. It is currently leading two coalitions on decent wages and living incomes and public development banks.

COP26 proved an important platform for IFAD to promote the role of small-scale producers in climate change adaptation and mitigation and creating resilient food systems. It hosted side events that underscored the fact that small-scale producers must be at the centre of climate change discussions, as they are greatly underserved by climate finance. It further emphasized that bringing rural small-scale producers out of poverty and food and nutrition insecurity will make positive, cascading contributions to meeting the humanitarian and environmental goals of the 2030 Agenda.

As part of its knowledge and policy contribution, IFAD produced the *2021 Rural Development Report (RDR) on Food Systems for Rural Prosperity: Investing in*

*Diversified Livelihood and Entrepreneurship for the Next Generation*.<sup>31</sup> The RDR is IFAD's flagship publication and contributes to the organization's input to dialogue on operational knowledge.

IFAD organized and participated in several events to raise awareness at the N4G Summit and reaffirmed its commitment to implementing "last-mile" interventions to address the double burden of malnutrition through its investments, pledging that:

- 60 per cent of new projects designed from 2021–2025 will be nutrition sensitive;
- by 2025, 25 per cent of women will report minimum dietary diversity; and
- by 2025, 6 million people in the developing countries where IFAD works will be provided with targeted support to improve their nutrition.

## UNEP

UNEP facilitates the CoP on Food Systems Approach<sup>32</sup> of the One Planet Network Sustainable Food Systems Programme. It also launched an initiative on sustainable food systems multi-stakeholder mechanisms (MSMs) to analyse national and subnational MSMs' cross-cutting contribution to sustainable food system policies in environmental, nutritional, agricultural and other areas, organizing three events as part of the UNFSS process. UNEP provided capacity development activities to the local authority of Kampala on urban and peri-urban agriculture for sustainable and healthy diets and resource efficiency. Moreover, its Regional Food Waste Working Groups have been providing near monthly capacity-building workshops to 25 member states, which are now working on national food-waste measurement plans and prevention strategies. Future sessions are planned, focusing on integrating food loss and waste into NDCs, food consumer behavioural change programmes, public-private partnerships and circular food systems. Lastly, as a key follow-up to the UNFSS, UNEP is reshaping its food systems and agriculture projects and workstreams to ensure that it is fit for purpose, to support Members in their implementation of national food systems pathways. One emerging area that UNEP is exploring is the nexus of land use, livestock production, One Health and sustainable diets.

## UNICEF

In 2021, UNICEF reached more than 400 million children, adolescents and women with services for the prevention and treatment of malnutrition. Moreover, an estimated 154 million children were screened for wasting, 5.5 million of which received life-saving treatment and care for severe wasting, including in humanitarian settings and fragile contexts. In year one of the roll out of its Nutrition Strategy 2020–2030, UNICEF provided strategic thought leadership by issuing programme guidance on the early prevention and treatment of child wasting (*No Time to Waste: Nutrition of School-Age Children and Large-Scale Food Fortification*). As cluster lead for nutrition, UNICEF led the development of the GNC Strategy (2022–2025). It also launched its first flagship Child Nutrition Report, entitled, *Fed to Fail? highlighting the Crisis of Children's Diets in Early Childhood in 2021*.<sup>33</sup> UNICEF also played a leading role in key advocacy events, including the UNFSS and N4G Summit, culminating in the launch of UNICEF's vision and agenda on food systems for children and N4G commitments to (1) reach at least 500 million children, adolescents and women annually with policies and programmes to prevent all forms of malnutrition, (2) secure at least USD 2.4 billion of

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/43704363/rdr2021.pdf/d3c85b6a-229a-c6f1-75e2-a67bb8b505b2?t=1631621454882>.

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/programmes/sustainable-food-systems/multi-stakeholder-mechanisms/copfsag>.

<sup>33</sup> <https://data.unicef.org/resources/fed-to-fail-2021-child-nutrition-report/>.

investment in 2022–2025, (3) support more than 30 high-burden countries in reaching at least 100 million children as part of its No Time to Waste initiative, including at least 9 million children with timely treatment annually by 2025, and (4) launch and lead the Global Alliance for Children’s Diets in partnership with WHO.

## WFP

The number of people benefitting from WFP nutrition programmes was scaled up significantly in 2021 when compared to 2020. Updated figures on WFP reach will be made available in the 2021 WFP Annual Progress report. In 2020, WFP reached a total of 17.3 million beneficiaries through nutrition-specific activities across 51 countries. 9.1 million people (3 million women and 6 million children) suffering from acute malnutrition benefitted from malnutrition treatment programmes. WFP significantly scaled up malnutrition prevention programmes, reaching 8.4 million people with interventions to prevent acute malnutrition, stunting and micronutrient deficiencies, including 5.8 million vulnerable children and close to 2.6 million pregnant and lactating women and girls.

In 2021, WFP provided technical assistance on food fortification or distributed fortified staple foods to more than 40 countries. Furthermore, WFP supported 12 countries in ensuring food systems delivered healthier diets and improved nutrition through Fill the Nutrient Gap analyses. WFP actively supported the preparation of the UNFSS, encouraging a strong nutrition focus, with special attention on the needs of those furthest behind. Its engagement included acting as UN anchor agency for Action Track 5, which focused on building resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress, and supporting a number of FSS Coalitions, including those focused on healthy diets, social protection, school meals and zero hunger. At the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit, WFP made an ambitious agency-wide commitment, provided significant support to help organize the summit, including by co-leading a session on nutrition in fragile contexts, and helped mobilize government commitments through the coordinated engagement of more than 25 WFP country offices.

## WHO

WHO is the global health organization committed to realizing the right to health and leading the fight to end the COVID-19 pandemic. It has issued several publications, Q&As and other communication materials specifically on COVID-19 and nutrition.<sup>34</sup> WHO guides and supports Member States in prioritizing, planning, implementing, monitoring and regularly evaluating multisectoral efforts to ensure universal access to effective nutrition actions, safe food and healthy diets by strengthening health systems and building better food systems within the human-animal ecosystem interface. WHO supported the preparation of the UNFSS and the N4G Summit. It served as the FSS Action Track 2 anchor agency, promoting the inclusion of health and nutrition. It published a new narrative in six United Nations languages on the multiple pathways of impact of food systems on health<sup>35</sup> and created a food system for health webpage<sup>36</sup> including information and social-media assets on a menu of policy actions for food systems transformation. Geneva Permanent Missions were regularly briefed on FSS and N4G progress by email and in three formal meetings. WHO developed guidance on healthy and sustainable diets, food safety, effective nutrition actions, cost-effective programmes and policies to reshape the food environment. It further supported policy implementation at national level, such as the establishment of mandatory policies to prohibit the use of trans fats, fiscal policies, policies to restrict marketing foods to

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.who.int/teams/nutrition-and-food-safety/covid-19>.

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240031814>.

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.who.int/initiatives/food-systems-for-health>.

children, regulations on the marketing of breastmilk substitutes and fortification policies. In response to a World Health Assembly request,<sup>37</sup> a WHO global strategy for food safety<sup>38</sup> was updated in coordination with FAO and in consultation with Member States and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE). WHO also acted as the Secretariat for the Nutrition Decade Labelling Action network, incorporating 19 Member States. WHO holds the Chair of UN Nutrition for 2021–2022.

## IV Conclusion

75. Though marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, 2021 was a special year for global nutrition. A series of key global processes and events took place, presenting valuable opportunities to raise awareness of the importance of nutrition in meeting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in mobilizing commitments to do so.

76. It was also the first full year of activity of UN Nutrition. Throughout 2021, UN Nutrition Members worked as a collective force to support countries and the various key global processes that took place. Collaboration between Members helped to identify key messages, entry points and prime opportunities to ensure sustainable healthy diets and good nutrition were at the heart of the UN Food System Summit and COP26. Closing the year, UN Nutrition contributed to the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit 2021.

77. The coherent engagement of UN Nutrition Members on these occasions helped to build bridges and a nexus between them, so that their individual strategies, policy measures and actions better contributed to positive nutritional and overall development outcomes. This inter-agency collaboration should result in concrete, consistent support for governments in realizing the country commitments made at these major summits (N4G and UNFSS). To this end, 2022 will be crucial to developing joint analyses and programming at national level to foster the realization of the commitments and global nutrition targets.

78. In light of the urgent nexus between healthy diets and the environment, as echoed by many agencies and other partners in 2021, in 2022, UN Nutrition will continue to work on nutrition and the environment, reinforcing, among other things, the interlinkages between nutrition, biodiversity and climate change. The Stockholm +50 meeting, the Biodiversity COP and the twenty-seventh UN Climate Change Conference (COP27) present key opportunities for UN Nutrition to engage by mobilizing its joint knowledge, expertise and advocacy in the run-up to these events. UN Nutrition aims to place nutrition at the heart of negotiations, elevating it from its peripheral role and making it an integral part of the environment and climate change agenda.

79. The countdown to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is ticking. With only eight years left, there is a pressing need to bring nutrition action to scale and transform our food system to enhance access to healthy diets for all from sustainable food systems.

80. UN Nutrition's coordination function will be instrumental in building momentum for greater nutrition commitments. While the number of UN Nutrition Members has remained stable since 2020, it is expected to increase in 2022.

81. UN Nutrition will galvanize the UN System into doing far more to support its Members, ensuring that the UN always speaks with a coherent and harmonized voice on nutrition as an essential step to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

<sup>37</sup> WHO (2002) *WHO global strategy for food safety: safer food for better health*. Geneva.

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/draft-who-global-strategy-for-food-safety-2022-2030>.