

The NCD Alliance

Putting non-communicable diseases
on the global agenda

Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) FAO online discussion on Nutrition-enhancing agriculture and food systems NCD Alliance Key Messages

Background on Nutrition, Food Systems and NCDs

- Today we face a triple burden of malnutrition: undernutrition, micronutrient deficiency and overnutrition/overconsumption, often times in the same country, community or household.
- NCDs are related to both under- and overnutrition. Maternal undernutrition increases the risk of an infant developing obesity and NCDs later in life. And overweight and obesity, including childhood obesity, are major drivers of the global NCD epidemic.
- Globally, just under one billion people are undernourished, while two billion people are overweight or obese. 65% of the world's population live in a country where overweight and obesity kills more people than underweight. In 2011, an estimated 43 million children under 5 years old were overweight, with the majority living in low and middle income countries.
- The modern global food system has failed to lead to adequate and healthy nutrition for all. Nor has it led to healthy ecosystems.
- Globalisation in the food system has enabled the great availability, affordability and acceptability of unhealthy eating patterns. This makes a significant and negative contribution to NCDs and their metabolic and behavioural risk factors, including overweight/obesity, and elevated levels of blood pressure and cholesterol.
- Thus these complex and multifaceted problems affect health, but have their roots in other sectors. Poverty, education, water sanitation, primary health care, and gender dynamics play a large role in the development of nutritional issues.

Key Messages on Solutions and Policies

- Nutrition-enhancing agriculture and food systems are one part of the solution to malnutrition in all its forms, including poor quality diets associated with NCDs.
- A multi-sectoral approach to addressing NCDs should include the agricultural and food sector. Actions and policies are needed to create policy coherence between agriculture, food, nutrition and health.
- Given that foods and ingredients are transformed as they pass from farm to fork, the solutions lie not just in agriculture, but the whole food supply chain.
 - "Short" food supply chains can be used to make healthier foods more available, affordable and acceptable, such as through farm-to-school programmes and local production for local markets in rural and small island communities.
 - "Long" food supply chains influence food availability, affordability and acceptability at the global level, and offer the greatest potential for change
- Policies with particularly high potential impact on NCD risk factors are those that influence substitutions between different types of fat and meat, and make fruit and vegetable more available, affordable and acceptable.
- Clearer and more rigorous analysis must be conducted to identify the policies and actions needed to create coherence between agricultural/food policies and policies to promote healthy eating. The methods available for doing so include participatory problem-tree analysis, food supply chain analysis, and food value chain analysis.
- By taking into account the repercussions of agricultural and food policies on healthy diet policies – and the repercussions of healthy diet policies for the actors and activities in the food supply chain – the nutrition and health sector can identify more effective, feasible and sustainable policies to promote higher quality diets.