WORLD FARMERS' ORGANISATION

NUTRITION FOR ALL: EMPOWERING FARMERS TO DRIVE FOOD SYSTEMS FOR HEALTH, PROSPERITY, AND SUSTAINABILITY

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World Farmers' Organisation
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Food is the product of land and water, the abundance of plants, animals and microorganisms found therein, and the skilful labour of farmers, foresters, fishermen, pastoralists, and hunters.

Food is not just a commodity for trade and markets, it is the product of natural resources combined with the farmers' work. Farmers are stewards of natural resources, providing nutrients for organisms to grow, maintain themselves and perform vital processes. Food nourishes. It is a Human Right. Food is a traditional expression of the people around it, from producers to consumers. Furthermore, food is directly linked to people and planet health.

The **world's farmers are engaged daily in providing healthy, nutritious food for all while respecting and considering the local and cultural diversity and eating practices**. In this capacity, farmers **play a big role in contributing to fighting the different faces of malnutrition, from starvation, wasting, and stunting to hidden hunger, obesity, and diet-induced cardiometabolic diseases**.

Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG 2) sets the target to end hunger, enhance food security, improve nutrition, and strengthen global sustainable agriculture by 2030. However, food security **indicators demonstrate a high probability of not meeting this 2030 commitment**.[1]

SDG 2 is at further risk if climate change policy does not recognise that the Paris Agreement clearly co-prioritises food production and climate ambition (Articles 2b). Measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change must be achieved alongside maintaining and increasing food production,[2] not at the cost of food production.

Addressing hidden hunger, particularly in low and middle-income countries, is a pressing concern that often goes unnoticed despite impacting over two billion people globally. This widespread issue arises from multiple micronutrient deficiencies, including iron, zinc, calcium, iodine, and several vitamins, often stemming from the consumption of energy-dense yet protein and micronutrient-poor. This issue is frequently linked to inadequate dietary choices, inaccessibility to nutritious food, and insufficient education regarding healthier nutritional practices, including the valorisation of nutritional local traditional food.

1 "Of the people in the world who were unable to afford a healthy diet in 2022, 1.68 billion, or 59 percent, lived in lower-middle-income countries. However, low-income countries had the largest percentage of the population that could not afford a healthy diet (71.5 percent) compared with lower-middle-income countries (52.6 percent), upper-middle-income countries (21.5 percent) and high-income countries (6.3 percent)". (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO 2024, 31).
FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2024. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024 – Financing to end hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms.* Rome.
https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/d5be2ffc-f191-411c-9fee-bb7374115760/content

"In 2022, 1 in 8 people in the world were living with obesity. Worldwide adult obesity has more than doubled since 1990, and adolescent obesity has quadrupled. Many low- and middle-income countries face a so-called double burden of malnutrition. It is common to find undernutrition and obesity co-existing within the same country, the same community and the same household". (WHO 2024).
WHO. 2024. *Obesity and overweight*.
https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/obesity-and-overweight

2 UNFCCC. 2016. *Paris Agreement*.
https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/parisagreement_publication.pdf

In recent decades, shifting away from food choices rooted in biodiversity and healthy diets has had a direct impact on human health, even among younger generations.

Further, climate change is projected to lower the nutritional value of global staple foods, as stated in the IPCC report.[3]

Trade can play a crucial role in ensuring global nutrition security. For example, in 2010, the variety of foods available through trade was nearly 60% greater than those produced domestically. By 2020, this difference had grown to almost 90%. Access to a wider range of foods via trade contributes to healthier diets and improved health outcomes.[4]

A nourishing, diversified, and complete diet should be guided by key principles:

- **All essential nutrients** - **vitamins, minerals, amino acids, essential fatty acids (especially polyunsaturated ones), and fibres** – **need to be represented, preferably through wholesome food approaches** that are naturally rich in a wide variety of bioactive, health-promoting compounds.
- **Ultra-processed diets are to be avoided**, countering the determination of some multinational food corporations to replace naturally and traditionally produced foods. Local preferences, resources and culinary traditions are to be respected.

A balanced intake of nutrients across food groups is maintained, with moderation to prevent overconsumption.

Consuming animal-sourced foods within well-formulated and plant-rich diets will provide nourishment for all but especially for more vulnerable groups such as pregnant women, the youth, infirm and older adults. Especially for children in developing countries, **having access to animal-sourced food can make a difference in reducing diseases, hunger and malnutrition**. These foods support optimal growth and development, preventing cognitive deficits, which can impede learning and development and school attainment.

Farmers do not only recognise the essential role of livestock and fisheries in providing affordable nutrition to rural and urban communities; they also acknowledge the vital importance of traditional staples like millets, pulses, wheat, corn, spices, etc.

[3] Increased CO2 in the atmosphere is projected to lower nutritional value (e.g., wheat grown at 546–586 ppm CO2 has 6–13% less protein, 4–7% less zinc, and 5–8% less iron.
IPCC, 2019: *Climate Change and Land: an IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems.* [P.R. Shukla, J. Skea, E. Calvo Buendia, V. Masson-Delmotte, H.-O. Pörtner, D. C. Roberts, P. Zhai, R. Slade, S. Connors, R. van Diemen, M. Ferrat, E. Haughey, S. Luz, S. Neogi, M. Pathak, J. Petzold, J. Portugal Pereira, P. Vyas, E. Huntley, K. Kissick, M. Belkacemi, J. Malley, (eds.)]
https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2019/11/SRCCL-Full-Report-Compiled-191128.pdf

[4] WTO. 2025. *Leveraging WTO rules to tackle malnutrition.*
https://www.wto.org/english/blogs_e/ddg_jean_marie_paugam_e/blog_jp_09jan25_e.htm

These do not only bring in important nutrients but also align with local food systems.

Farmers can play a role in supporting and informing campaigns aimed at sensitising and conscientising more nourishing dietary habits based on robust combinations of animal and plant-derived foods, complemented with well-targeted nutrient fortification programs where appropriate and effective.

Farmers are ready to actively create awareness of the origin of their produce and their daily activities on the farm, promoting a stronger connection between consumers, policy-makers and the agricultural and rural world, **including through the labelling of the products**.

KEY MESSAGE

Respecting farm-produced food[5], **resilient and sustainable production methods**, **supporting farmers**, especially small-scales farmers, women and youth, encouraging the spread of healthy, diversified diets linked to local peoples' traditions and dietary habits, contribute to defeating malnutrition by **providing healthy and nutrient food and ensuring a nutritional secure future for all**.

Global farmers are open to collaborating with all social forces that wish to share with WFO the objective of respecting the naturalness of food and the progressive abandonment of food models that are detrimental to human health and do not respect the food habits and needs of populations.

[5] Farm-produced food, as opposed to lab-grown food (Lab-grown foods are substances produced for human consumption, which had been invented in the laboratory. The source of these products are tissues or cells, which do not require farming competences to create and do not occur in nature at scale).
WFO. 2023. *WFO Position on Real Agriculture*. Rome: WFO.
https://wfo-oma.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/WFO-position_Real-Agriculture_GA-adopted-.pdf

RECOMMENDATIONS

Consumer-farmer link and education

- **Strengthen public awareness** among citizens **regarding the benefits of farm-produced through education and campaigns**, **promoting transparency** based on science and traditional knowledge, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders.
- **Facilitate a closer relationship between farmers and consumers**, through awareness campaigns and enhanced transparency, built on science and traditional knowledge.
- **Promote direct selling and local markets to further connect consumers with farmers**. This approach will benefit both parties: **consumers will be granted better access to fresh, healthy, seasonal produce** and, **farmers will receive a fair return for their work through fair remuneration**.

Farmer practices and sustainable food production

- **Promote crops and livestock species, cultivars and breeds** which are best adapted to the local circumstances, oriented to protect and enhance biodiversity. **Policies should encourage greater support for local crops that are sustainable and culturally significant**.
- **Enable farmers to improve the quality of production** by providing nutritional information about the foods produced and options for the biofortification of crops where appropriate.
- **Improve food production** through efficiency, best practices and the evolution of breeds and varieties to meet and work within a changing climate.
- **Support farmer-led research and innovations** that integrate traditional knowledge with modern science.

Policy and financial support for farmers

- **Advocate for policies that support best management practices and sustainable methods of production** as geographically appropriate.
- **Expand access to finance, training, and inputs** to enable farmers to adopt climate-resilient and biodiversity-friendly farming methods.

Supply chain and trade policies

- **Advocate for a supply chain transformation**, **from farm to fork**, **facilitating proximity between producers and consumers** and deep ties between production and territories, when appropriate.
- **Align trade policies with health objectives** by reducing tariffs on nutritious foods and discouraging subsidies for unhealthy products.
- **Promote farm-to-table initiatives**, **local markets, and procurement programs** that prioritise nutrient-rich local foods.

Research and innovation

- **Invest in the agrifood sector through adequate tools and resources by focusing on innovation, research, and new technologies** aiming at **having less environmental impact while preserving competitiveness, income, and quality**.
- **Conduct research on local traditional nutritious food**, and their impact on health, environment and local economy.

Food quality and nutritional value

- **Promote the availability of a well-formulated and nourishing diet** based on local and traditional preferences of the population.[6]
- **Promote access to nutritious foods produced through real agriculture**, which supports a sustainable future for livestock production and the Blue Economy.[7]
- **Expand fortification programs responsibly** since it is necessary to ensure that micronutrient fortification complements natural dietary diversity rather than replacing it.

6 WFO. 2023. *WFO Position on Real Agriculture.* Rome: WFO. https://wfo-oma.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/WFO-position_Real-Agriculture_GA-adopted-.pdf

7 WFO. 2017. *WFO Position on Livestock Production*. Rome: WFO. https://wfo-oma.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/policy-livestock-production_WEB.pdf

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