New HLPE Report on

Data collection and analysis tools for food security and nutrition

HLPE eConsultation on the Report’s scope

21 March 2021

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Thank you for providing this opportunity to comment on the Scope of the new HLPE Report on Data collection and analysis tools for food security and nutrition. We welcome that the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) has decided to task the HLPE to work on this important theme and see this as another significant opportunity to further strengthen CFS’s contribution to the achievements of the SDG targets by 2030 and contribute to help countries implement their commitments made at the Second International Conference on Nutrition and under the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition.

At the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), where Governments committed to eradicate hunger and prevent all forms of malnutrition worldwide, Governments reaffirmed that nutrition data and indicators, as well as the capacity of, and support to all countries, especially developing countries, for data collection and analysis, need to be improved in order to contribute to more effective surveillance, policy making and accountability. Data are essential and key for monitoring and accountability mechanisms, including on institutional arrangements, capacities and investments). (ICN2 Framework for Action).

We would like to share the following considerations for the scope of the new HLPE report:

1. It would be essential that the new HLPE report fully integrates the nutrition dimension of ‘food security and nutrition’ and all elements related to healthy diets.

The Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) has rewritten the global narrative on nutrition and has identified the failure of our current food systems to provide all people with affordable healthy diets that are produced in a sustainable way as the common nominator of hunger and malnutrition in all its forms. Also, the latest HLPE report 15 fully integrates this new narrative.

Relevant Global Monitoring Frameworks related to nutrition and health and well-being elements include the Global Monitoring Framework for Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition (which includes the six global nutrition targets), the Monitoring Framework for the Global Action Plan on Noncommunicable Diseases (which includes the diet related NCD targets), as well as the WHO Global Nutrition Monitoring Framework: operational guidance for tracking progress in meeting targets for 2025 (which includes additional fourteen core indicators). These complement existing monitoring frameworks and indicators for food security (such as the measurements of undernourishment, food insecurity experience scale, and others). The annual publication of the State of Food Security and Nutrition (SOFI), a joint undertaking by 5 UN agencies, integrates these elements in a cross sectoral manner; the reports also point out gaps in data collection and analysis tools which are of relevance to this new HLPE report.
2. Data should be looked at from the perspective of the entire food system.

Given the mandate of the CFS, and the suggested title of the planned HLPE report, we would welcome a more holistic approach, which examines data collection and analysis tools across the food system. This would align the report with previous work of the HLPE (such as HLPE #12 and #15) and be a critical support for countries in the use of the recently endorsed CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition. Only if data across food systems is collected and analysed, can policies, investments and programs for food security and nutrition be adequately designed and monitored, and impediments to improving food security and nutrition at local, national, regional and global levels be identified and addressed.

3. A specific priority should be given to consumers, and the needs for metrics and data on individual food consumption, diet quality and food environments.

Consumers are among the key food systems’ actors. For the planned report to reach its objectives to identify challenges and gaps in collecting, analysing and using data in decision-making processes on food security and nutrition, we support that the report will specifically explore what data analysis and tools are needed to ensure that FSN policies address all the dimensions of food security and nutrition, including, agency and sustainability (HLPE, 2020). For that end, the new report should devote particular attention to challenges and solutions in empowering consumers. Consumers are part of food systems’ actors.

Production and availability of food does not necessarily match the consumption needs for healthy diets. It is essential to help policy makers analyse how food and agriculture production address the needs of the population for nutritious foods that enable healthy diets. Data on individual food consumption is needed to better inform agricultural and food policies and programs to make them more nutrition sensitive, for example through the development of quantitative food-based dietary guidelines that also include sustainability consideration (UNSCN 2016; SOFI 2020). The identification and application of suitable food environment and diet quality measurement is a critical element which should be looked at in this report with potential ways forward. (Food Systems Dashboard).

The needs for improved metrics, and for a feasible political process for reviewing policies with a healthy diet lens are universal, irrespective of a country’s type of food system, income level or hunger and malnutrition problem. Building the global and national capacity for this work is a long-term undertaking that requires vision and sustained commitment, the benefits of which can be seen in the enormous utility and impact that has accompanied the Demographic and Health Surveys over several decades of development and implementation. Including the need for metrics and data for the monitoring of food environments and diets in the new report would help countries to advance with developing policies to provide year-round access to food that meets people’s nutrition needs and promote safe and diversified healthy diets for all.

Dietary surveys in low-income countries are often limited by inadequate research infrastructure, low investment, lack of data collection and data processing technology and insufficient food composition information (WHO-UNICEF Technical Expert Advisory group on nutrition Monitoring (TEAM) 2020). Furthermore, we would like to refer to the following which can inform the HLPE team:

- WHO 2017 Global Nutrition Monitoring Framework, which includes guidance on measuring dietary diversity,
- WHO Guidance on Mainstreaming Biodiversity for Nutrition and Health (2020), which proposes a set of indicators to assess the baseline status of integration of biodiversity and nutrition using a systems approach,
4. Regarding gaps, the report should look into the lack of disaggregated data by gender and at subnational level.

While improved global data systems now show which regions and countries are progressing or falling behind, in many countries weak/non-existent information systems and insufficient data, often remain a substantial challenge, including for example on nutritional status in specific groups and over a long enough period to track trends (MTR Foresight report 2020). Data disaggregated by gender will be key for advancing women’s empowerment and equity. With this regard, more substantial consideration should be given to address the data gaps on the links between agricultural production, adequacy of diets and health and nutritional outcomes (UNSCN 2018). Moreover, disaggregated data at subnational level will be key in reducing rural inequalities and ultimately in ensuring progress towards ending hunger and malnutrition for all (Food systems Dashboard).

5. Significance to address the data needs on national policies and investments and to overcome the sectoral fragmentation

For the report to reach its objective to “identify challenges and gaps in collecting, analysing and using data in decision making processes on food security and nutrition”, the data needs on national policies and investments merit to be looked at closely. Improved data and data systems related to agriculture and food as well nutrition policy, programme design and implementation, to inform policy making for more enhanced nutrition sensitive agriculture and ensuring food security and enable healthy diets should feed into an integrated cross-sectoral data platform at different levels. WHO, monitors country progress on nutrition-related policies, governance mechanisms, capacities and actions, through the Global database on the Implementation of Nutrition Action (GINA) and regular conducts of Nutrition Policy Reviews, a comprehensive analysis of nutrition-related policy environment, coordination mechanisms, available capacities and actions being undertaken in the WHO Member States on related topic areas. This complements the FAO databases on food and agriculture policies and investments.

The new HLPE report could have great value by addressing the need for bringing relevant data and information systems across sectors together through integrated data platforms at all levels to break the sectorial silos and truly encompass the nutrition and health related data elements for achieving food security and nutrition for all.

- WHO/UNICEF TEAM- Use of nutrition data in decision making: a review paper (2020)
  https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/use-of-nutrition-data-in-decision-making-a-review-paper


- WHO: GINA database https://www.who.int/nutrition/gina/en/


• FAO/WHO. ICN2 Rome Declaration on Nutrition