



## Action Track Discussion Starter

### Action Track 2 – Shift to healthy and sustainable consumption patterns

- 1. The problem to be tackled: Unhealthy diets have become a primary source of poor health and environmental degradation around the world, with glaring disparities between rich and poor.**

While hunger is once again on the rise and undernutrition persists, diet-related health conditions such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer are also increasing rapidly.<sup>3,4</sup> More communities face a double burden of malnutrition, where both undernutrition (stunting, wasting, micronutrient deficiencies) and overweight/obesity are prevalent with more than half of the world's population struggling with hunger and malnutrition.<sup>5</sup> One reason for this is that, in recent decades, food systems have tended to provide more quantity but less quality food.<sup>6</sup> Greater availability of cheap calories has not been accompanied by better availability of a diversity of nutritious foods. In addition, in today's economies, healthy diets can cost, on average, five times more than diets that simply provide enough calories. Current food policies, food industry practices and shifting consumer preferences are driving overconsumption and dramatic growth in consumption of ultra-processed foods and beverages.<sup>7,8,9,10</sup> Dietary risk factors include diets that are low in fibers, fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains, nuts and seeds, milk, seafood, calcium, and healthy fats and/or high in -fatty acids, salt/sodium, red or processed meat and sugar-sweetened beverages.<sup>2</sup> In addition, in many countries overconsumption of animal-sourced





poor population groups, sufficient quantities of healthy protein sources, including sustainably-produced dairy, eggs, blue foods (marine and freshwater fish, shellfish and algae), meat or alternative protein sources;



a healthy, safe and sustainable diet and the links between food consumption, environment and health; regulating food marketing; improving food-related sustainability and nutrition standards (for food in public institutions, and for improved nutrition labelling); developing and integrating environmental sustainability into dietary guidelines; increasing awareness, information and transparency across the food value chains to foster consumer trust and confidence in the food supply, including through digital means; and creating aspirations for food systems that deliver diets that are safe, healthy and sustainable.

- B. Improve availability and access to healthy, safe and sustainable diets.** This could include: integrated food policy and regulatory reforms to improve food environments; leveraging schools as a key environment for delivering healthy, safe and sustainable diets and fostering lifelong healthy and sustainable consumption; reforming public procurement policies; applying behavioral insights to nudge consumers as well as other food system actors to make the healthy and sustainable choice the easiest and most attractive choice (including food reformulation, product experience and changes in retail environments); mobilizing significant private/public investment to increase production, access and affordability of foods that contribute to healthy and sustainably produced diets; invest in improving food-related infrastructure and logistics systems, and shortening of supply chains; implementing trade rules that facilitate improved access to healthy, safe and sustainable diets; strengthening capacity to implement and enforce food safety laws (including CODEX standards); developing partnerships to minimize



**C. Enabling interventions.** These could include:

- a. Identifying common ground (e.g. sustainability as a potent motivator for dietary changes that support better health) and potential trade-offs (e.g. the need to increase animal-sourced food intakes for young children in low-income settings but the generation of greenhouse gases caused by overconsumption of certain animal-sourced foods in high-income countries) involved in shifting to consumption which is both healthy and sustainable.
- b. Finding ways to off-set the costs associated with transitioning to healthy and sustainable consumption (e.g. supporting farmers, food businesses and workers that are negatively affected by change; redirecting funding; providing public infrastructure funds; providing donor funding to support change in low- and middle-income countries; facilitating access to loans and encouraging the private sector to invest).
- c. Capitalizing on the growing movement to improve urban food environments, and identifying specific challenges and opportunities in both urban and rural communities.
- d. Empowering women and preparing youth to be food system leaders by investing in developing their leadership, technical and managerial skills and addressing the barriers they face in accessing resources, technology and markets.
- e. Prioritizing the support, protection and promotion of first food systems including breastfeeding.<sup>25</sup>
- f. Mobilizing young people and finding common purpose with other social movements — including the health, agriculture, environment, education, sports/physical activity, faith-based and culinary communities — as critical agents of change.
- g. Piloting and scaling up behaviour change interventions that are effective in reducing consumer food waste and increasing adoption of healthy and sustainable diets.
- h. Promoting social justice in the food industry, protecting people employed in food systems everywhere and fostering more environmentally sustainable practices by using full supply chain traceability.

The game-changing solutions will be crowdsourced and developed through three work streams supported by a diverse leadership team and need to be tailored to local contexts, including cultural and socio-economic aspects, the specific political economy of food, how the food systems function, existence and level of implementation of policies and regulations, institutional capacities and the constraints on consumers' capacity to change what they eat. Nonetheless, any country or local jurisdiction can build an agenda for change using the broad action framework outlined above.

Action Track Chair  
Vice Chair  
Youth Vice Chair  
UN Anchor Organization

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## References

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<sup>2</sup> GBD 2017 Diet Collaborators. Health effects of dietary risks in 195 countries, 1990-2017: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2017. *Lancet*, 2019. 393, 10184, P-1958-1972

<sup>3</sup> FAO; IFAD; UNICEF; WFP; WHO. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020: Transforming Food Systems for Affordable Healthy Diets; FAO: Rome, Italy, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Branca et al. Transforming the food system to fight non-communicable diseases. *BMJ*. 2019;364:1296.

<sup>5</sup> Branca et al. A new nutrition manifesto for a new nutrition reality. *Lancet Series The Double Burden of Malnutrition*

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.glopan.org/foresight1/>

<sup>7</sup> Baker, P., Friel, S. Food systems transformations, ultra-processed food markets and the nutrition transition in Asia. *Globalization and Health*. 2016; 12.

<sup>8</sup> Barry Popkin, 2012, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3257829/>

<sup>9</sup> WHO-UNICEF Lancet Commission: A future for the world's children?

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(19\)32540-1/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)32540-1/fulltext)

<sup>10</sup> Baker et al, 2020. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/obr.13126>

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