



Sowing the seeds for nutrition:

What food systems do we need?

Summary of the key issues for consideration in global policy processes

The Conference

At the invitation of the German Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture Christian Schmidt, more than 230 representatives from governments, international organisations, civil society, private sector enterprises, farmers' organisations, academia, think tanks and the interested public from 35 different countries met in Berlin to discuss sustainable food systems that promote healthy diets and good nutrition.

The international Policies against Hunger 2016 conference aimed at contributing to reflection, dialogue and decision making by providing the necessary platform for discussing implementation measures and policies that are crucial to better adapt food systems to people's needs. The output of the conference will enrich the ongoing international political processes towards better nutrition and is a contribution to the Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025).

The conference offered an opportunity for exchange and discussion without having the intention of finding consensus. Bringing together representatives from all stakeholder groups involved in food systems to engage in expert and plenary discussions, working groups and round table discussions, and also taking the perspectives of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food and of three German ministries into consideration, the conference was an excellent opportunity for formulating key messages for participants in on-going policy processes.

This summary report collates individual and collective thoughts, ideas, proposals, concerns and suggestions. It does not necessarily represent a consensus of all conference participants, but is seen as a very important and relevant contribution to the debate about better diets and nutrition through better food systems.

Food systems for healthy diets and better nutrition

Combating malnutrition and ensuring good nutrition and healthy diets for a growing population is one of the major tasks for the coming years. Participants agreed that there is an urgent need for change and action. Business as usual will not work in a world where existing food systems

- contribute to the triple burden of malnutrition, with 800 million undernourished people, 2 billion people overweight or obese and 2 billion people suffering from one or more micronutrient deficiencies (hidden hunger);



- contribute to poor diets that are the number one risk factor of diseases and cause enormous economic and social costs to individuals communities and societies;
- are not sustainable and produce huge waste and loss of food;
- do not focus sufficiently on healthy diets and nutrition.

Participants underlined that real transformation is needed, with substantial changes in the way food is produced and consumed and in the way relevant policies are made. This is a prerequisite to ensure the human right to adequate food and nutrition for current and future generations.

Powering nutrition – bridging sectors: What role for food systems?

Diversification, processing, women's empowerment and nutrition education are key elements of a sustainable food system for nutrition. These elements were intensively discussed in working groups and major results were reported to the plenary.

Diversification

- Greater attention is needed to the natural resource base/production base (water, seed, planting material, breeds of livestock and fisheries; consideration must be given to traditional varieties, seasonality, access to land (common land) and change of land use;
- Food and nutrition systems must be based on nutritional needs; access to animal-source food, fruit, vegetables and pulses is key; however, policies often do not support this;
- A multi-sectoral approach is needed and the SUN movement was mentioned as a good example for this;
- Principles and goals (no ideology), e.g. fair prices for farmers, rights-based principles, environmentally sustainable production and meeting the nutritional needs of all people were identified as important elements in diversified food systems;
- There is a need and good opportunity for behavior change communication; a lot needs to be done in this field and specific actors need to be reached, for example agricultural extension workers who are often men and who often focus on staple crops;
- Specification versus diversification was a hot debate;

Processing

- Nutrition education for consumers is a cross-cutting topic and should concentrate on healthier diets, local products and appropriate consumption behavior;
- Processing is a 'women's topic'; preparation of food and specific needs of women must be addressed in food systems; food prepared by women could get special promotion through labelling;



- There is an area of tension between small and/or local producers on the one hand and bigger, often transnational companies on the other; key questions include who has the better opportunities and what type of support is needed for what type of business;
- Research and technology are important in supporting processing, but may also create new dependencies;
- Food fortification was the hot topic in this working group;

Women's empowerment

- Women face a lot of challenges, constraints and violations of their rights, such as unrecognized and unvalued work, gender based violence, lack of access to resources;
- Key elements for improvement include equal access to resources, creating a culture of empowerment, providing legal support for women and recognizing that men need to be involved in the realization of women's rights;
- There is a need to implement gender-oriented education and learn the other perspective;
- Best practices are holistic, context-based and gender transformative; they change the way food systems and households work and function for women and men;
- The hot topic of the group was the involvement of men in realizing women's rights;

Nutrition education

- There is a need to change policy and power structures at different levels and to make policies side-specific; the participation of local partners is very important;
- An important approach is to provide support for people in finding their own solutions, taking traditional knowledge into account;
- Male empowerment to share task of better nutrition;
- Nutrition education is a never-ending learning process for all (nutritionists, teachers);
- Teaching by doing and coherence between what is said and done is key;
- The hot topic of the group was the enabling environment that is needed for nutrition education to be effective, for example the right of working women to breastfeed, and regulations and structural changes are needed;

Policies and action needed to make food systems sensitive to nutrition

Many participants stressed that changes in the current way of producing and consuming food first and foremost need determined political will and action as well as results oriented cooperation of many actors from many stakeholder groups and sectors. Governments, parliamentarians, business, civil society organisations, research, the United Nations with its various bodies dealing with agriculture, health, water, education, women's affairs, social affairs, trade, industry, consumer protection play a key role and must create linkages.



Conference participants identified promising steps for future action at a round table discussion:

- a regulatory framework, e.g., a law for the right to food, is needed to foster accountability, to fix market failure, to ensure an environmentally sound and sustainable food industry, and to protect consumers;
- ensure appropriate and immediate action and create objective-oriented incentive structures;
- promote multisectoral, 'global', holistic and multi-stakeholder approaches, owned and sustained by all actors and facilitation of transdisciplinary exchange and coordination;
- strengthen programmes, for example on nutrition knowledge in schools, the strengthening of local markets, the integration of fisheries, public feeding, the reduction of food losses, the promotion of food sovereignty and support for gender sensitive action;
- change perceptions, exchange knowledge and share experiences to inform decision making.

Conference participants also identified key messages for people who are influential in nutrition policies in their country:

- people and institutions play a key role;
- address all forms of malnutrition, mainstream nutrition in all sectors and approaches, bring multiple stakeholders together;
- ensure governance and proper regulations, for instance by establishing conditions that facilitate action, foster accountability, promote fair and equitable policies, ensure independent research, control lobbying, preserve agrobiodiversity for a sustainable future, promote policies and regulations for sustainable production and healthy food;
- support nutrition education of the public, in schools;
- scale up successful pilot programmes and local practices;
- adapt local crops and protect traditional healthy diets, supporting export with a do-no-harm approach;
- listen to and inform people to make the right choice for themselves.

Referring to key messages from the round table discussion, government, research, civil society and UN experts made their point:

- 'Stop talking and implement': currently the most problematic issue is that we are putting money into food production systems that do not focus on nutrition; policies have to be translated into actions sending a wake-up call that nutrition is a cross-sectoral issue.



- **'Mobilize for action & accountability'**: It is all about what is produced and what is on the table; use publicity and advocacy, addressing policy makers to shape food systems and raise awareness.
- **'Importance of nutrition education in schools'**: children's nutrition is not a topic in school curricula; the goal must be that everybody learns key facts about nutrition during his/her time at school, e.g. kitchen gardens in schools to learn how to produce diversified food
- **'Let people eat what they want'**: this is important for various reasons, i.e., firstly, it should be a human right to choose what to eat; secondly, businesses change our intentional selection by fast food and fortified foods; thirdly, there may be geographical and financial constraints which hinder people to choose what they want to eat
- **'Wake up'** because 1/3 of the world's population suffers from malnutrition in one of its various forms; poor diets are the number one risk factor of diseases we have to shape diets; reposition food systems to improve people's diets is an urgency; currently, actors are sleepwalking.

The way forward

Participants agreed that improving diets and scaling up nutrition is – in large parts - a political decision. Governments have to ensure an enabling environment for producers' and consumers' choice. 'The healthy and nutritious choice must be the easy choice' must be the political objective. The Conference addressed the right topic with the right actors at the right moment – a moment when

- the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 2 to 'End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture' and SDG 12 to 'Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns' has been agreed on and respective relevant action will be prepared in almost all countries in the world;
- stakeholders are working on the follow-up to the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) in 2014 and its Framework for Action,;
- the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), supported by a Report on Nutrition and Food Systems which the High Level Panel of Experts of the CFS is currently preparing, will play a major role in shaping food systems for healthy diets and nutrition, and
- the Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025) has just started as a 'wake-up call'.

The conference enabled all participants and stakeholders to gain new insights and perspectives and confirm certain positions. These insights and perspectives can be used to be fed into the above mentioned processes with the final aim to develop transformative and sustainable food systems that ensure the human right to adequate food and nutrition.

The Chair of the CFS was invited to make use of the results from the round table discussions which were handed over to her, who stressed the importance of the Decade of Action on Nutrition to take action and make sustainable food systems for better nutrition a reality.



The German Government plans to spread conference outcomes at the 43rd CFS and call for action.