



Sowing the seeds for nutrition:

What food systems do we need?

Combating malnutrition and ensuring good nutrition for a growing population is one of the major task for the coming years. Sustainable food systems play a key role in order to be able to achieve this task.

800 million of people are undernourished, 2 billion people suffer from one or more micronutrient deficiencies (*hidden hunger*) and 2 billion people are overweight or obese. The different forms of malnutrition often coexist within the same country or household or even person. This **double or triple burden of malnutrition** does not only constitute a high risk of health for the population that is often combined with the violation of human rights, but is also one of the biggest obstacles for development in the world. Malnutrition imposes high economic, social and health costs at household, community and country level that are avoidable through appropriate action. Due to their specific nutritional requirements, children and women are more at risk and affected by the negative consequences of malnutrition.

On the other hand, there is broad international agreement on the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger and the human right to adequate food. The **human right to adequate food** will be achieved when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

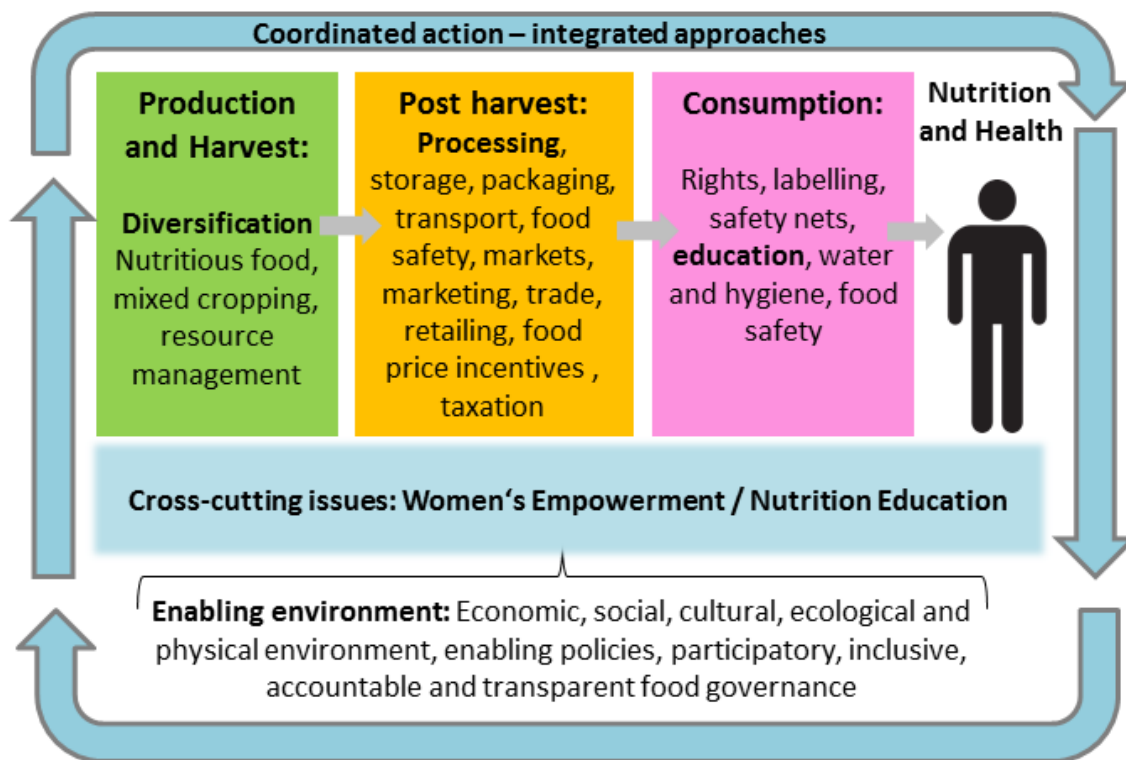
Addressing malnutrition therefore requires the consideration of the **whole food system** from production through processing and marketing to consumption of food. The food system encompasses all people, organizations, institutions and processes by which food is produced, processed and brought to consumers to ensure a healthy and sustainable diet for all. Every aspect of the food system influences the availability, accessibility and affordability of diverse, nutritious and safe food items and thus the ability of consumers to choose, prepare and eat healthy diets (FAO, SOFA, 2013).

Agricultural growth is fundamental for providing food or generating income and contributes to nutrition, but is not enough. The production of additional nutrient-dense food improves dietary diversification and raises the micronutrient availability. Proper processing, storage, distribution and retailing make the provision of a wider variety of nutritious and safe food throughout the year possible, avoid food losses and waste and allow farming households gain (new) markets and better prices. Better

food handling, sanitation and storage technologies improve safety and nutritional quality of foods. For all these activities nutrition education and empowerment of women are crucial cross-cutting issues within the whole food system to improve nutritional outcomes and health sustainably.

Therefore, improving nutrition depends on every aspect of the whole food system and requires a cross-sectoral and sustainable approach including integrated action and complementary interventions, as presented in the figure.

Figure: Elements of food systems



Source: adapted from FAO SOFA, 2013

How to improve nutrition in all sectors that are relevant to make the food system function by linking agricultural and food value chains to nutritional outcomes is the main topic of the Policies against Hunger 2016. The current research, country experiences and approaches to strengthen nutrition interventions and to empower people, especially women, to realise their human right to adequate food and improve nutrition through bridging sectors will be discussed in four **working groups** along the following topics: **(1) Diversification; (2) Processing, (3) Women's empowerment, and (4) Nutrition education.**



The global political framework for the conference is the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its 17 **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** (especially 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’) and the **Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2)** in 2014. In the focus of the Policies against Hunger 2016 stands the implementation of the *‘recommended actions for sustainable food systems promoting healthy diets’* and *‘the recommended actions for nutrition education and information’* that was agreed upon in the Framework for Action during ICN2. The **Committee on World Food Security (CFS)** - the foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental platform for all stakeholders (including civil society, research institutions and private sector) – will have a major role to play regarding food systems by promoting effective evidence-based policies for reducing malnutrition, through inclusive multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral processes. The basis for the work of CFS will be a Report on Nutrition and Food Systems which the High Level Panel of Experts of the CFS is currently preparing.

Policies against Hunger 2016 aims to contribute by providing the necessary **platform for discussing implementation measures and policies** that are crucial to adapt food systems better to people's needs and implement the ICN2 Framework for Action recommendations. The expected output will enrich the ongoing international political processes towards better nutrition and is a contribution to the Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025).