



Publication of the 2021 Global Nutrition Report: *The State of Global Nutrition*

New report calls for step up in action as poor diets and malnutrition drive increasing levels of preventable ill health, deaths and damage to the planet

United Kingdom, 23 November 2021 –The 2021 Global Nutrition Report highlights that current progress on nutrition is woefully inadequate, with poor diets and malnutrition causing increasing harm to human health and the planet. The issue is further compounded by disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and climate change. As we approach the end of the Year of Action on Nutrition, global leaders are urged to step up the fight against poor diets and malnutrition.

Poor diets and malnutrition in all its forms remain unacceptably high across the world highlighting the need for stronger action.

According to the Report, achieving all the global nutrition targets¹ by 2025 is, at the current rate of progress, proving to be impossible. The world is off-course to meet 8 out of 9 global nutrition targets including wasting and stunting in under five-year-olds, low birth weight, childhood overweight and adult obesity.

Significant numbers of children remain malnourished: 149.2 million children under five years old are stunted, 45.4 million children are wasted and 38.9 million are overweight. Meanwhile, 2.2. billion adults – over 40% of all men and women – are overweight or obese and no country is on track to halt the rise of obesity.

The effects of Covid-19 are knocking us further off course. Research featured in the Report tells us that around 118 million more people were facing hunger in 2020 than in 2019, while people with obesity and other diet-related chronic diseases are worse affected by Covid-19. Additionally, the pandemic has diverted resources and put available financing for nutrition at risk.

Renata Micha, Chair of the Global Nutrition Report’s Independent Expert Group and Associate Professor in Human Nutrition at the University in Thessaly in Greece, said: *“The 2021 Global Nutrition Report shows that our*

¹ Set by the World Health Organisation: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-NMH-NHD-14.2>

current diets, which have not improved in the last 10 years, are now posing a major threat to our health and our planet. There needs to be a step-change in action to improve poor diets and tackle resulting malnutrition in all its forms to achieve the high social, economic and environmental gains possible.”

New analysis: Our diets are increasingly harming our health and the planet.

Contrary to scientific guidance, fruit and vegetable intake is below the recommended 5 servings per day (60% and 40% respectively), while red and processed meat is on the rise at almost five times the maximum recommendation of one serving per week.

While poor diets are present everywhere, there are notable inequalities in food consumption with lower-income countries having the lowest intake of health promoting foods and higher-income countries having the highest intake of food with harmful health impacts.

Current diets are directly impacting the health of our planet. New estimates show that the global food demand is creating more than a third (35%) of [global](#) greenhouse gas emissions. Northern American diets have the greatest environmental impacts while African and Asian diets have the least, but neither are environmentally sustainable.

If globally adopted, the dietary patterns of Northern America would result in a level of greenhouse gas emissions that is more than six times above a value in line with limiting global warming to below two degrees Celsius.

Due to our current dietary patterns, no region is on track to meet the set of diet-related health and environmental targets each nation agreed to as part of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The financial costs of addressing malnutrition are rising, but the cost of inaction is far greater.

Financing to tackle poor diets and malnutrition has been consistently insufficient. At the same time, the funding needed to meet nutrition targets is growing. An additional US\$10.8billion will be needed every year from 2022-2030 to meet targets on wasting, stunting, anaemia and breastfeeding alone. However, the Report highlights research that demonstrates that the economic gains to society from investing in nutrition are significant and could reach US\$5.7 trillion a year by 2030.

Projections are able to tell us that aid and domestic financing will take until the end of the decade to recover to pre-pandemic levels. Far more financing must come from across traditional, innovative and private sources to get global nutrition back on track and the Report highlights that this is possible to achieve with the right action.

In this Nutrition Year of Action, decision-makers must leverage Nutrition for Growth as a reset moment.

As the 2021 Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit (a major global pledging moment for nutrition), to be held under the auspices of the government of Japan, approaches, **Shawn Baker, Chair of the Global Nutrition Report’s Stakeholder Group and Chief Nutritionist for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), said:** *“The global community has the knowledge and resources to tackle the effects of poor diets and malnutrition, so the rates presented in the 2021 Global Nutrition Report are unacceptably high. As we come together at the Nutrition for Growth Summit in December, we must commit to the evidence-based solutions and increased financing needed to tackle these issues.”*

While there have been prior commitments towards tackling malnutrition, these have largely neglected diet as a key area for action. Of the 383 commitment goals, only 17 focused on improving food production or food quality, while diet-related goals and diet-related NCD targets were absent. What’s more, countries that have pledged to address nutrition at previous N4G Summits are struggling to meet commitments and have reported that the pandemic severely or highly affected their ability to meet 43% of their commitment goals.

Accountability is also key to driving nutrition progress but, so far, measuring the impact of commitments has proven difficult. Only 29% of past N4G commitments were SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely).

The next Summit provides a new opportunity to change trajectory. To promote better action and accountability, the Global Nutrition Report has developed the Nutrition Accountability Framework, the world’s first independent and comprehensive platform for making SMART nutrition commitments and monitoring nutrition action. This new framework has been endorsed by key stakeholders including the government of Japan, as organiser of the 2021 N4G Summit.

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NOTE TO EDITORS

The 2021 Global Nutrition Report (GNR) offers the world’s most comprehensive picture of the state of global nutrition. The GNR is a multi-stakeholder initiative consisting of a [Stakeholder Group](#) of high-level members of government, donor organisations, civil society, multilateral organisations and the business sector, and an [Independent Expert Group](#) of world leading experts in nutrition.

The GNR was conceived following the first Nutrition for Growth Initiative Summit (N4G) in 2013 as a mechanism for tracking the commitments made by



100 stakeholders spanning governments, aid donors, civil society, the UN and businesses.

The Report is data-led and produced each year to cast a light on where progress has been made and identify where challenges remain, whilst playing the important role of helping hold stakeholders to account on the commitments they have made towards tackling malnutrition.

The GNR has developed the Nutrition Accountability Framework (NAF), the world's first independent and comprehensive global accountability framework for nutrition. In this new role, the GNR has been endorsed by world leaders including the government of Japan, as organiser of the 2021 N4G Summit, and the World Health Organization (WHO), to lead and drive forward global accountability for nutrition. The NAF, launched in September 2021, will help to shape, and publicly track and monitor, these commitments to ensure that the world is equipped with the tools necessary to assess the collective impact of our action and course-correct as needed.

By informing the nutrition debate, the GNR aims to inspire action to create a world free from malnutrition in all its forms.

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