
FOREWORD

The *2021 Global Nutrition Report* (GNR) offers the world's most comprehensive picture of the state of global nutrition and assesses the scale of the challenges faced in the fight to tackle poor diets and malnutrition in all its forms. This year's report provides a concise data-focused update on the state of diets and nutrition around the world, which will be released annually thereafter. Independent analysis of the best data on nutrition is critical for evidence-based, timely and effective actions to ensure we deliver on our global commitment to end poor diets and malnutrition. This is an intentional shift from the GNR's tradition of exploring specific themes in depth, which will also continue as needed to assess timely global issues of importance to nutrition.

The report's findings lay bare the unsustainability of the status quo and how we continue to face a global nutrition crisis. Poor diets and resulting malnutrition in all its forms are unacceptably high across the world, creating one of the world's greatest current societal challenges. The need for bolder, sustained and better coordinated action on nutrition that goes far beyond the nutrition community has never been greater. When accounting for the vast and interconnected health, economic and environmental burdens, this global nutrition crisis is a reality we can no longer afford to ignore.

Ending poor diets and malnutrition in all its forms is a goal that is intrinsically linked with some of the world's most pressing challenges

The Covid-19 pandemic is fuelling the global nutrition crisis and highlighting the importance of good nutrition for our health. Achieving healthy diets and ending malnutrition has become an even greater challenge than before, particularly for the most vulnerable groups such as people in poverty, women and children, and populations living in fragile states. At the same time, the strong links between poor metabolic health, including obesity and diabetes, and worse Covid-19 outcomes have highlighted the importance of improving nutrition for good health worldwide. Tackling poor diets and malnutrition, and the underlying inequities, policies and systems that drive them, is therefore a critical part of recovering from the impacts of the pandemic and ensuring populations are resilient to such shocks in future.

We are witnessing constrained public resources and shifting spending priorities due to Covid-19; yet investments in nutrition are vital for sustainable economic development. While the nutrition crisis pre-dates the pandemic, it is made only more urgent by the potential damage that the loss of resources can inflict on global food security and people's health. Both international and national public resources have been impeded due to an economic downturn, while significant volumes of financing are being directed towards fighting the pandemic. This risks populations, particularly in the poorest and most fragile countries, experiencing a reduction in vital support towards preventing or alleviating malnutrition. Financing for pandemic recovery must have nutrition as a key component if the world is to 'build back better', with significant economic returns to be gained from nutrition investments. Innovative approaches and greater action from the private sector will be necessary to boost financing available to levels required to meet nutrition goals and end malnutrition in all its forms.

The nutrition crisis is both a cause and a symptom of the climate emergency. On one hand, our current diets are acting as major drivers of environmental pollution and resource demand. On the other hand, we are seeing global warming and pollution affecting access to food. Growing urgency to address the climate emergency and key milestones such as the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) are mobilising leaders to take action. Just as consideration of climate change must be a key component of efforts to improve diets and nutrition, so must nutrition and healthy, sustainable diets be a significant part of the climate conversation. We will succeed in meeting these global challenges only if we work together.

The need for greater accountability and a new role for the GNR

*In recognition of the urgency of the nutrition crisis that presents one of our biggest global challenges today, 2021 has been declared the [Nutrition for Growth Year of Action](#), with the [Tokyo Nutrition for Growth \(N4G\) Summit](#) in December representing a landmark opportunity for stakeholders to accelerate efforts towards stronger nutrition action spanning food, health and social protection systems. This follows the [UN Food Systems Summit](#) in September, which highlighted the need to accelerate the transformation of food systems to enable better diets and improve nutrition. These two key events and their shared goal of ending malnutrition in all its forms should be a turning point in taking tangible, collective action. *The critical need to increase accountability* was a core theme of a [joint statement](#) released ahead of both summits, which called for a “comprehensive framework for accountability, in order to monitor nutrition commitments and how they translate into impact”.*

Of course, multiple players – including governments, donors and the private sector – have made commitments on nutrition in the past. Since 2014, the GNR has been given the role of monitoring these commitments, which are not bringing the level of change we need to see now.

Where resources are stretched, better tools for commitment-making, and strengthened accountability for nutrition, are critical to address gaps in action and ensure that commitments translate to impact. The GNR has therefore 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. This is the first time accountability for nutrition commitments has been prioritised, with an emphasis on the quality, as well as quantity, of the commitments. 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.

The scale of the challenges we face in the fight to improve poor diets and end global malnutrition may seem daunting, but this fight is winnable

Over the past two years, we have seen global leaders step up and take strong action to respond to the unprecedented global challenge of Covid-19. The pandemic has also shown us that the only way forward is to work together and not in isolation. We need the same recognition of the nutrition crisis that faces everyone, in every country. We must come together and go bigger, broader and bolder than ever before.

The need to prioritise and invest in nutrition has never been greater. Data is fuel for action. We call on leaders to use the findings of the *2021 Global Nutrition Report* to make the commitments that will deliver healthy populations, prosperous economies and a sustainable planet.

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