

GENERATION NUTRITION

How has COVID-19 changed the game on nutrition?

Roundtable - 8 September 2020, 14:00-15:30 CEST

KEY MESSAGES

- Despite immense suffering and great loss of life, the **COVID-19 pandemic has offered a unique political momentum and visibility on the need to focus on nutrition and food security.**
- Civil society organisations should embrace the current political momentum and continue to push for **even more robust EU leadership on nutrition**, as a critical piece to achieving the SDGs and Leave No One Behind.
- Nutrition is a critical indicator for human development.
- Policy:
 - o The **EU must revise its EU Action Plan on Nutrition** to ensure it addresses all forms of malnutrition and includes a concrete target on wasting.
 - o The **Farm to Fork Strategy's global dimensions must be strengthened** - ideally through European Commission development of a **comprehensive food and nutrition security policy framework for external action**, in line with requests from the European Council.
 - o The **EU must also ensure strong joint positions** for global moments including next year's **UN Food Systems Summit** and the **Nutrition for Growth Summit** in December 2021 in Tokyo.
 - o The **EU must push to achieve greater policy coherence between its nutrition, food, climate and trade objectives.**
- Funding:
 - o Political commitments on nutrition must be supported by a **renewed ambitious financial pledge for the next budgetary period** to provide the necessary funds to deliver. To respond to the significant needs and the short and long term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU's previous commitment of EUR 3.5 billion for 2014-2020 should be at least maintained then increased for the 2021-2027 period.
- Programming:
 - o All EU programmes in the COVID-19 preparedness, response, and recovery phase must address nutrition.
 - o The EU must adopt a **multisectoral approach to nutrition**, including food security, health, education, water, sanitation and hygiene, social protection and gender.
 - o Nutrition programming must follow a **nexus approach**, addressing all forms of malnutrition in both humanitarian and development contexts.
 - o Youth and women have an important role to play in food security and nutrition, and need to be empowered to do so within EU programming.

ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY

Generation Nutrition, a network of civil society organisations (CSOs), collaborating to end malnutrition in all its forms by 2030, invited representatives of European Union (EU) institutions, Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement members, EU Member States representatives, Members of the European Parliament, alongside various CSOs representatives, to discuss how COVID-19 has changed the game on nutrition. Given the cancellation and postponement of key political and pledging nutrition events in 2020, this roundtable aimed at keeping up the momentum on the urgency of an EU-integrated approach to nutrition in the COVID-19 crisis response and recovery phase.

The roundtable discussion, which 56 participants joined, was divided into two sessions, focusing on (1) what we need to see in the upcoming EU programming cycle to close the gap on nutrition goals and (2) what EU's leadership and political will for nutrition in a COVID-19 context must be.

Session 1: What do we need to see in the upcoming EU programming cycle to close the gap on nutrition goals?

COVID's impacts are silent and delayed – let us not let our guards down

After welcoming remarks by Céline Mias, CARE International's EU Representative, stressing that the COVID-19 pandemic is unfolding in a world that is already experiencing a dire hunger crisis, where 2 billion people -- one in every four people -- do not have reliable access to sufficiently nutritious food, Dr. David Nabarro gave his opening statement. Dr. Nabarro is the World Health Organization Director-General's Special Envoy for COVID-19 Preparedness and Response. He stressed that COVID-19 revealed already existing fragilities and how the pandemic has further contributed to undernutrition. Bearing in mind that the impacts of COVID-19 on nutrition will be silent and delayed, he highlighted that its consequences, such as low birth weight infants and stunting will not be seen until months to come.

Good nutrition is the most important aspect of early childhood development and a significant lack of a nutritious diet in the first years is very hard to overcome. Good nutrition is one of the most important contributors to human performance. It is thus our economic, societal, and moral obligation to consider nutrition as a cost-effective prevention measure. Dr. Nabarro concluded by asking the EU to include nutrition in all its programming, including COVID-19 preparedness and response programmes, disaster preparedness, agriculture, social protection, health, gender, and trade.

To achieve food and nutrition security, young people must be empowered

Mike Khunga, a SUN Movement Youth Leader from Malawi provided first hand examples on COVID-19's impact on Malawi youth, who are no longer profiting from a school feeding programme. Government movement restrictions have led to the closure of markets and a lack of availability in nutritious food. Mike Khunga also recalled meeting a 16-year-old girl, who was sold off into forced child marriage as her family could no longer afford food. In order to improve food security in Malawi, Mike Khunga suggested that the government should create formal training on agriculture for young people. Land and resources acquisitions

should be made easier and youth should be empowered to become active agents in food systems.

Nexus approaches to nutrition programming are crucial

Elisa Pozzi, Senior Advisor for Food Security and Livelihoods at Save the Children outlined how her organization adapted its programmes to COVID-19, focusing particularly on child and family survival, as well as on communicating and sharing important health information with communities through alternative means. Based on the impact of COVID-19 and other crises who are increasingly protracted and recurrent, Elisa Pozzi stressed the need for a nexus approach to programming so that crucial development gains are not lost.

Team Europe Initiative: Addressing the root causes of food insecurity and malnutrition

Sihem Sassi, Team Leader of the Human and Social Development Sector at the EU Delegation in Burkina Faso, outlined the EU's response to the pandemic in the country and in the wider Sahel region. Budget flexibility to the Burkinabe government was granted, food was distributed to the most affected households, and medical services were provided. Instead of developing long-term programmes without taking into consideration the changing levels of insecurity people in the country are facing, the EU is stressing the need for an inclusive nexus approach. The new Team Europe Initiative aims at addressing the root causes of food insecurity and malnutrition in Burkina Faso and the Sahel.

Session 2: Leadership and political will for nutrition in a COVID-19 context

Utilize today's political momentum on nutrition

In her remarks, Dr. Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana, Vice-chair of the Committee on Development of the European Parliament, underlined that COVID-19 exposed the fragility of our food systems. This however, at the same time, gives more visibility and political momentum to food systems and nutrition. Current EU initiatives, such as the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy provide great opportunities to put people and our planet at the center. CSOs must use this momentum and highlight the effects malnutrition has on societies as a whole and brief Members of the European Parliament on how nutritious diets positively influence any aspect of human development. Cross-committee discussions on nutrition should be incentivized and, through references to global frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), concrete measures, necessary to achieve the Agenda 2030 of Zero Hunger, should be highlighted to underline the need for the European Parliament to consider nutrition in all its political decision-making.

Put your money where your mouth is

On the question of which concrete commitments on food security and nutrition we can expect from the German Presidency, Martin Hoppe, the Head of Division for Food and Nutrition Security at the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), highlighted that food security is very high on Germany's agenda and that they continue to financially support relevant political initiatives. Martin Hoppe also emphasized Germany's support for the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy, on which they are currently

finalizing Council Conclusions, but stressed the need to strengthen the global dimension of both strategies. Germany is therefore pushing the European Commission to develop a comprehensive policy framework on food and nutrition security in external action, and to include it as a priority in the European Commission's working programme. Germany is also pushing for a joint EU position on the UN Food Systems Summit 2021 and commissioned a study, in collaboration with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, on effective measures to achieve SDG2 by 2030, including outlining a realistic cost estimate.

EU leadership on nutrition within the SUN Movement

Action Against Hunger's Head of Advocacy for its Regional Office for West and Central Africa, Christelle Huré outlined her expectations of the EU's involvement in the SUN Executive Committee, based on her experiences as a representative of the SUN Civil Society Network on the SUN Executive Committee. As previous speakers, she called on the EU to implement the nutritional nexus approach and to tackle all forms of malnutrition, in both development and humanitarian contexts. She stressed that the EU has a great opportunity to bring the nexus approach forward in the SUN Movement. Based on her experience, she underlined the need for multisectoral approaches, including health, WASH, and social protection. Christelle Huré called on the EU to update the policy framework on food and nutrition security, to revise the EU Action Plan on Nutrition and include a target on wasting, as well as to extend financial commitments to 2027. At the country level, the EU can play a key role in providing guidance to SUN focal points (especially in countries where the EU is a SUN convener), urge EU Delegations to participate in SUN networks and support them on how to prioritize nutrition in humanitarian and development programmes and funding.

Show political commitment by investing in the 2021 Nutrition for Growth Summit

Lastly, Dan Irvine, World Vision International's Senior Director for Health and Nutrition, warned that already dire food insecurity has significantly worsened during the pandemic. Due to today's interconnectedness, COVID-19 is not only about a global infectious disease, but also about supply chains, intellectual and financial capital, and migration. As such, EU global leadership on nutrition is essential. Dan Irvine urged the EU to invest in the 2021 Nutrition for Growth Summit (N4G) in Tokyo and stressed that its postponement must not diminish its political importance. This year's Summit preparations comprehensively examined food systems, universal health coverage, the implications of the private sector, trade policies. The EU has an opportunity to amplify the nutrition cause and lead this process forward successfully by not only investing in the UN Food Systems Summit but also the N4G.

He finished by outlining three recommendations: an increase of the Thematic Pillar allocation of the future Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) to 11.5 percent; develop clear accountability for nutrition-specific investments and outcomes across the NDICI and the Multiannual Financial Framework, and maintain a dedicated nutrition human resource capacity in the DG DEVCO structure.

Generation Nutrition Generation Nutrition is a network of civil society organisations, collaborating to end malnutrition in all its forms by 2030. Members of Generation Nutrition include Action Against Hunger, Alliance2015, CARE, Global Health Advocates, Save the Children, WaterAid and World Vision.

