

THE 2021 NUTRITION YEAR OF ACTION: INVESTING IN SYSTEMIC COUNTRY SOLUTIONS FOR ENHANCED OUTCOMES

A vision statement

Hunger and malnutrition have been exacerbated by the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.¹ This unprecedented global crisis has revealed profound systemic failures in the systems that support nutrition.² The pandemic demands a rapid response that includes life-saving nutrition actions and urges us, at the same time, to 'build forward better'. Building on the Scaling up Nutrition (SUN) Movement multi-sectoral work in countries, this year presents a unique opportunity to align global players and financial incentives behind country-led actions, to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable, while ensuring the systemic transformation needed to achieve the nutrition goals and catalyse progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



Making the most of 2021, #NutritionYearOfAction

Several major global events are primed for 2021, including the UN Food Systems Summit (September) and the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit (December). Both are critical moments in the UN Decade of Action for Nutrition, to draw global attention to the problems of hunger and malnutrition, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. **But let's aim higher. We must seize the momentum to 'build forward better' towards more resilient systems that can sustainably provide good nutrition for all, even in the face of crises.**

It is critical to recognise that there is no one-size-fits-all solution at the country level. Every country needs a tailor-made approach. This will require dialogues across multiple sectors to reach a confluence of perspectives and develop a collective, systemic, and sustainable path forward. Global stakeholders must facilitate this process and align behind country-owned solutions for results and impact. **This focus on country-led systemic change is fully aligned with the SUN Strategy for its third phase (2021-2025).**

The SUN Movement will engage at global, regional and national levels. At the global level, it will mobilise its Networks and partners, to leverage both Summits and ensure that nutrition is elevated throughout as a catalyst of change to achieve the SDGs. It will advocate for achieving concrete and accountable nutrition commitments that are aligned behind countries self-defined priorities. Through its Global Support System, the SUN Movement will support the empowerment of SUN stakeholders at the regional and country level to engage in and contribute to the global momentum, to give all the impetus to strengthen their own commitments to achieve sustainable and transformational impact in each specific context.

¹ See the latest research from the [Standing Together for Nutrition](#) (STfN).

² United Nations Secretary-General policy brief, [The impact of COVID-19 on food security and nutrition](#).

Country-driven, country-owned food system transformations

The [Food Systems Summit](#) (FSS) preparatory processes are already ongoing and include several complementary workstreams, inclusive of multiple stakeholders, to ensure a strong interface between science, policy, and implementation, recognising that pathways to food systems transformation need to be rooted in national and local realities. It challenges us all to broaden our scope and navigate context-specific interplay and necessary tradeoffs between consumer demand, private sector interests, public regulations, as well as agricultural, health, trade, and environmental policies.

The SUN Movement will grab the Food Systems Summit opportunity to leverage and strengthen capacity around the food systems agenda at the country level, elevating nutrition as a key lever and outcome of food systems transformations. [Food Systems Summit Dialogues](#) will offer one of the most dynamic ways to engage stakeholders at the country level. As part of the FSS, all SUN stakeholders are invited to engage in national-level dialogues, bringing food system stakeholders together and engaging them in considering how they can unite around transformative actions in support of the SDGs.

National-level dialogues: an opportunity to build on SUN's work and kickstart its new strategy in SUN countries. Expected outcomes include initiating transformative action to achieve sustainable impact for the sake of people's nutrition, health, and well-being, while at the same time catalysing ambitious commitments across all nutrition stakeholder groups throughout 2021, in the lead up to the Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit.

Health systems and social protection: ensuring access to life-saving nutrition interventions

In parallel to being engaged in the Food Systems Summit processes and activities, we must pay special attention to keeping a **strongly connected engagement in the health and social protection workstreams of the N4G Summit**. We cannot afford to overlook the life-saving nutrition actions needed today.

The tendency in times of crisis is to focus on food security measures and on the treatment of severe forms of malnutrition. Doing so will save lives in the short term, but **only a complete nutrition multi-sectoral package will result in sustainable nutrition impact**. This includes integrating basic nutrition intervention into universal health coverage and generally looking at improving feeding habits, as well as improving access to health services, vaccines and WASH programmes – all proven life-saving interventions essential to reduce child and maternal mortality. A continuity of investments in multi-sectoral nutrition programmes contributes to improved recovery from disease and resilience to economic shocks. Since resilience is a common feature of both Summits, the FSS can act as a powerful springboard for the N4G Summit.

The SUN Movement will liaise with SUN governments, businesses, multilateral institutions, donors, and other development partners to mobilise accountable commitments around elevating nutrition as an essential component of universal health coverage and social protection programmes, as well as a powerful lever to bridge the humanitarian-development gap.

Sustaining nutrition investments

The financing aspect, a cross-cutting component of both summits, will be essential in this regard. [Ceres2030's research](#), published in October 2020, has revealed that donor governments must roughly double the amount invested in food security and nutrition each year, together with an additional USD 19 billion a year from low and middle-income countries' own budgets, to tackle the extent of the malnutrition crisis. Investing in integrated portfolios of interventions across health, food, and social protection systems, and towards gender equality, as opposed to seeking improvements in siloed sectors, has been found to be much more effective.

We must ensure that 2021 sees governments, donors, and philanthropists rise to the challenge, despite the gloomy economic context. Investments in nutrition are among the best value-for-money. They are essential in achieving the SDGs and will contribute to a more resilient, prosperous, and peaceful world.



2015 Global Nutrition Report #NutritionReport