



WFP Nutrition Policy

SUMMARY



World Food Programme

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WFP Nutrition Policy (2017-2021)

WFP’s new Nutrition Policy details how the organization will support governments to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 2, particularly target 2.2, to end all forms of malnutrition by 2030.

Building on the successes and learnings of the 2012 Nutrition Policy, the new Nutrition Policy of the World Food Programme (WFP) reaffirms the organization’s commitment to addressing malnutrition as a primary channel to reach Zero Hunger. The new policy aims to contribute to the elimination of all forms of malnutrition—including overweight/obesity—and confirms addressing nutrition in emergencies as a central priority.

As climate, socio-political and economic dynamics continue to place stress on food and health systems, and as alarming levels of malnutrition persist, new ways of improving nutrition are also required. The policy therefore puts forward an integrated approach to nutrition that simultaneously considers issues of availability, access, demand and consumption of nutritious foods – with a goal of adequate and healthy diets for vulnerable groups of all ages.

With its strong operational and technical skills, WFP will use its broad range of nutrition experience in various contexts, both to support direct implementation and to provide governments with technical assistance in developing and sustaining nationally-owned nutrition solutions. To the furthest extent possible, WFP’s interventions will reinforce and align to national nutrition plans.

As women often bear the primary responsibility for feeding their families, gender equality and women’s empowerment are essential to eliminating malnutrition. The nutrition policy reconfirms WFP’s commitment to implementing the WFP Gender Policy by considering societal and intra-household gender dynamics in the design of nutrition programmes.

The Sustainable Development Goals & Agenda 2030

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) endeavour to reach the people furthest behind first. They also give critical importance to malnutrition as a contributor to, and outcome of, poverty. The 2030 Agenda brings malnutrition to the centre of the global policy framework, and reinforces the global community’s resolve to eliminate malnutrition.

Nutrition is interrelated with eight SDGs because of how it impacts, and is impacted by: poverty; education; sustainable growth; poor water and sanitation; quality healthcare; gender inequality; sustainable consumption; and environmental conservation.

Emergencies, climate change and resilience

Ending malnutrition in all its forms requires that nutrient needs are met before, during and after emergencies. Recognizing that conflict and climate change can amplify the need for nutrition interventions in contexts where malnutrition rates are already above critical levels, WFP will focus on the changing nature and increasing complexity of emergencies, as well as an understanding of the links between emergencies and long-term nutrition outcomes.

In addition to growing in frequency and complexity, many emergencies are now becoming protracted crises; therefore, treating malnutrition remains critical but is insufficient on its own. Prolonged crises erode assets, livelihood and health, resulting in multiple pathways to malnutrition. For this reason, resilience-building is imperative, and good nutrition is an integral part of this. Good nutrition results in resilient people who are healthier, can work harder and have greater physical reserves. Resilient people, communities and nations are also better able to protect the nutrition of the most vulnerable groups in the event of stresses and shocks.

WFP will work to ensure that humanitarian responses and long-term development actions are responsive to immediate nutrition needs while also addressing the underlying causes of malnutrition. With national governments, WFP will increase its focus on resilience building and the prevention of malnutrition, even in emergency settings.



Nutrition-specific and -sensitive interventions

WFP will use nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive approaches to address both the immediate and underlying causes of malnutrition. Both approaches are mutually reinforcing: nutrition-specific interventions address the immediate causes of malnutrition (such as inadequate dietary

intake) while nutrition-sensitive approaches address the underlying causes of malnutrition by drawing on complementary sectors (such as agriculture, health, social protection, and water and sanitation, amongst others).

Defining malnutrition

‘Malnutrition’ refers to acute malnutrition (wasting), chronic malnutrition (stunting), micronutrient deficiencies and overweight/obesity. Each year, malnutrition is the underlying cause of 45% of deaths among children under 5. Approximately 2 billion people suffer from micronutrient deficiencies; 51 million children under 5 are wasted, 159 million are stunted and 43 million are overweight. This leads to generations of adults who live with the consequences, and to significant losses in national productivity and economic growth.

Key examples of nutrition-specific work include treatment and prevention of chronic or acute malnutrition. A nutrition-sensitive approach, for example, is when a nutrition objective is integrated into the design of school meals programmes, a humanitarian response, or livelihood programme with the aim of directly improving diets. Working in partnership, the potential impact of WFP’s nutrition-sensitive programming is significant because of its global presence, diversity of interventions, and capacity to deliver various types of support to nutritionally vulnerable populations.

WFP will continue to prioritize support to the most vulnerable groups, including children aged 6–59 months, pregnant and lactating women, and malnourished adults, especially those living with HIV and/or Tuberculosis. Efforts will also be guided by where evidence shows the greatest impact can be made such as during the ‘first 1,000 days’ (from conception to a child’s second birthday) and by investing the nutrition of adolescent girls. All interventions will build on existing local solutions and will be designed with an understanding of the many forms of malnutrition, given that overweight and obesity increasingly affect WFP’s most vulnerable beneficiaries.

The double burden

More than 44 lower- and middle-income countries are experiencing the ‘double burden’—a combination of undernutrition and overweight/obesity in the same population.

Although seemingly disparate nutrition issues, they share a common cause: poor diet. The risk of both overweight/obesity and undernutrition in the same populations are significant barriers to countries’ development.

Partnerships

A world free from malnutrition can only be attained through coordinated government-led partnerships that involve various sectors including from the UN (e.g. FAO, UNICEF, IFAD, UNHCR, etc.), NGOs, civil society, businesses and academia—as well as local producers, processors, distributors, retailers, farmers and communities.

Given the multi-sector nature of nutrition, WFP remains committed to collaborating with a diversity of sectors and governments to scale up evidence-based nutrition programmes. Through in-country and regional partnerships, as well as through leadership and participation in global coordination platforms, such as the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement, partnership remains a cornerstone of WFP's nutrition work.

Contributing to the global knowledge base

Appropriate policies and programmes must be built on accurate and rigorous analysis of the nutrition context. WFP will build on existing data, and identify and work to fill gaps in order to support governments and other partners in undertaking holistic nutrition situation analyses. Through innovative tools, such as the Fill the Nutrient Gap analysis, WFP will support governments in translating scientific analysis into evidence-based nutrition policies and programmes. Transparent situation analysis promotes national ownership, and provides a clear understanding of how nutrition is affected by drivers that cut across sectors. WFP will continue to work with partners and research institutes to document best practices and lessons learned through operations research that can better inform multi-sector nutrition strategies and identify linkages that will improve actors' collective impact on nutrition.

