

DEPARTMENT OF NUTRITION AND FOOD SAFETY

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

2023

The world is facing multiple challenges of climate change, conflicts, and economic crises that have brought suffering and despair to millions of people.

However, there have been significant public health achievements that are worth celebrating.

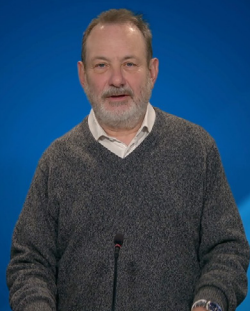
These achievements show the value of WHO's global health leadership in setting objectives, aligning partners, and driving change.

It would not be possible to make so much progress without the passionate engagement of colleagues in all WHO offices – country, regional and headquarters.

Enjoy the reading!



World Health Organization



75 HEALTH FOR ALL

Dr Francesco Branca, MD, PhD

Director, Department of Nutrition and Food Safety,
World Health Organization



World Health Organization

1 The WHO guideline on the prevention and management of acute malnutrition in infants and children under 5 years.

36 countries have committed to reforming primary care services and implementing the WHO guidelines, thus protecting over 200 million children

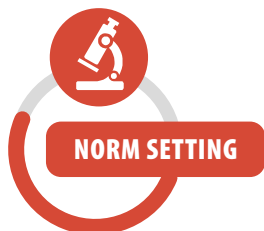
2 Guidelines on fats, carbohydrates, and non-sugar sweeteners complementary feeding and a position paper on red meat have been published providing a solid foundation for defining healthy diets in adults and children

3 Remarkable progress has been made in eliminating industrial trans fats. WHO-recommended best-practice policies now cover 3.7 billion people or 46% of the world's population in 53 countries, compared to 7% just five years ago

4 The fight against obesity has entered a new phase, with 28 countries, host to 1.1 billion people, that have scaled up their response to obesity through actions on prevention and management

5 Whole genome sequencing (WGS) technique has the potential to change how we detect and monitor microbial hazards in the food chain to reduce foodborne diseases. The WHO report provides guidance on the capacities that need to be in place before WGS can be successfully used for the surveillance of and response to foodborne diseases

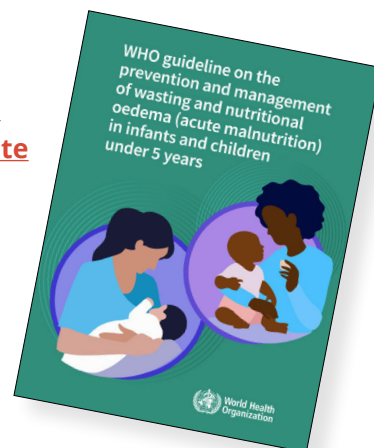
SETTING NORMS, STANDARDS AND BENCHMARKS TO REDUCE THE BURDEN OF DISEASES CAUSED BY UNSAFE FOOD, UNHEALTHY DIETS AND MALNUTRITION



Setting norms and standards using robust scientific, ethical and independent processes

Wasting guidelines published

NFS published the new [guideline on the prevention and management of wasting and nutritional oedema \(acute malnutrition\) in infants and children under 5 years](#), which was launched at the [Global Food Security Summit event](#) hosted by the UK government. This guideline was requested by the United Nations (UN), [Global Action Plan on Child Wasting \(GAP\)](#) as a crucial response to the persistent global issue of acute malnutrition, which affects millions of children worldwide.



The guidance emphasizes the **importance of adequate home diets, access to quality healthcare services, early identification of at-risk mothers and infants, better integration of nutrition services into health systems, and empowering community health workers to treat acute malnutrition in communities.** It aims to inform

the development or revision of guidelines, protocols, tools, and manuals.

WHO is working with UNICEF and other UN agencies to support governments and health workers to implement these recommendations and adapt them to the country's needs.



To achieve this, the GAP will accelerate action towards four key outcomes that will directly contribute to the achievement of the SDG targets on wasting:

- 1** Reduced incidence of low birth weight
- 2** Improved child health
- 3** Improved infant and young child feeding
- 4** Improved treatment of children with wasting



Mohammad Bash

IMPACT

This timely response to the persistent global issue of **acute malnutrition** is part of the commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) **target of eliminating malnutrition by 2030.**



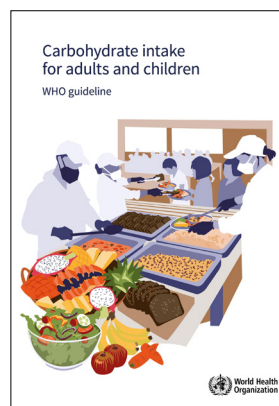
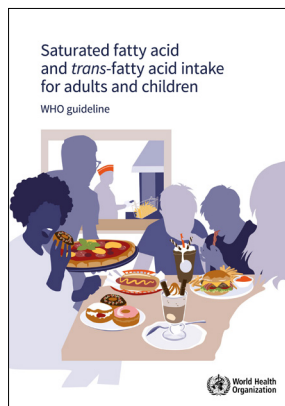
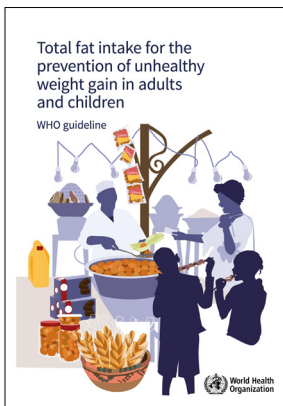
Mohammad Bash

Healthy Diets

In 2023, **we have made significant progress in promoting healthy diets** by developing guidance for adults and children based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. As part of this effort, we are pleased to announce the **release of five new publications:**

These include:

Three WHO guidelines on the intake of **total fats, saturated and trans-fat** and **carbohydrates**, contain recommendations that aim to reduce the risk of unhealthy weight gain and diet-related noncommunicable diseases, such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and certain types of cancer.



The WHO guideline on the **use of non-sugar sweeteners WHO guideline** advises children, and adults (including pregnant women) **not to use non-sugar sweeteners** for weight control or as a means of reducing the risk of diet-related noncommunicable diseases.



iStock/Alina Rosanova



Information brief on **Red and processed meat in the context of health and the environment** was published which is at the heart of the definition of sustainable healthy diets.

Sustainable healthy diets are now on our agenda to address climate change.



IMPACT

Defining the concept of healthy diets represents a significant milestone which empowers a wide audience in the development, design, and **implementation of policies and programmes in nutrition and public health.** This leads towards healthy diets and ultimately to better health outcomes.



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Complementary feeding of infants and young children

In 2023, we also prioritized the dietary needs of young children with the release of the **Guidelines for complementary feeding of infants and young children**.

The first two years of life are a crucial window for preventing malnutrition and a critical moment to establish healthy diets. This **guideline** provides normative evidence-based recommendations intended for policy-makers, technical and programme staff at government institutions and organizations involved in the design, implementation, and scaling of programmes for infant and young child feeding.



To mark the release of the guidelines, a **webinar event**, organized by WHO and UNICEF, served as a platform to shed light on the current state of complementary feeding in low- and middle-income countries. It was also announced that there will be a new Global Complementary Feeding Collective established in 2024.

Policies to protect children from the harmful impact of food marketing: WHO guideline



NFS released a **new guideline** on policies to protect children from the harmful impact of food marketing. **Children and adolescents continue to be exposed to powerful food marketing**, which promotes less healthy food options and uses a wide variety of marketing strategies that are likely to appeal to children. **Such marketing negatively shapes children's food preferences, their food choices and dietary intake.** To address this challenge, this evidence-informed guideline recommends countries implement

comprehensive mandatory policies to protect children of all ages from the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages.



ayaka_photo



Wavebreakmedia

IMPACT

WHO commitment to supporting national governments with the adoption and implementation of these recommendations **will build the country's capacity to support a child's nutrition** during this critical developmental period of their life and **help them establish long-term dietary patterns.**

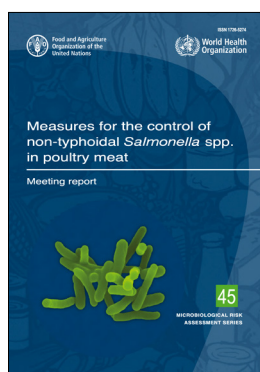
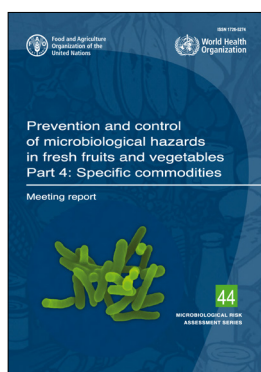
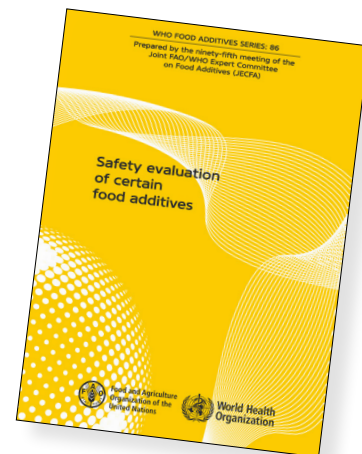
Scientific Advice - Food Safety

In terms of **food safety**, NFS had again tangible impact in 2023 on the jointly run **FAO/WHO CODEX Alimentarius programme** by providing sound scientific advice on a major number of substances through several expert meetings on Microbial Risk Assessment (**JEMRA**), on Pesticide Residues (**JMPR**), on Food Additives, on residues of veterinary drugs and on chemical contaminants (**JECFA**), and Ad Hoc Expert Consultation Meetings.

The **Safety evaluation of certain food additives** publication was released in 2023 subsequent to the Ninety-Fifth Meeting of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA). The monographs include detailed summaries of various food additives.

The **ninety-sixth meeting of JECFA took place in July 2023** to evaluate the safety of certain food additives and flavourings. One of the food additives evaluated toxicologically and assessed for dietary exposure was **aspartame** to which the Committee concluded that dietary exposure to it does not pose a health concern.

The reports of ad hoc Joint FAO/WHO Expert Consultations on **Risk assessment of food allergens** include reference doses (RfDs) for global priority allergens such as walnut, cashew, almond, peanut, and egg.



The joint FAO/WHO Meeting on Microbiological Risk Assessments (JEMRA) published six reports which include **prevention and control of microbiological hazards in fresh fruits and vegetables**. One report on the **Safety and quality of water used in the production and processing of fish and fishery products** and a report on **Salmonella in poultry meat**. The joint

FAO/WHO Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR) provided the scientific basis for the Codex Alimentarius Commission to set international food safety standards for pesticide residues in food. The 2023 Meeting evaluated **35 pesticides**, including 7 new pesticide evaluations and 5 old pesticides under the periodic re-evaluation programme.

IMPACT

WHO develops scientific risk assessments to define safe exposure levels to various chemicals and microorganisms in our food as well as nutrition-related standards.

Codex Trust Fund

In 2023, the **FAO/WHO Codex Trust Fund-2 (CTF2)** actively supported developing and transition economy countries to enhance their ability to participate effectively in Codex work. Now in its eighth year of operation, more than **50 CODEX member states have benefited from CTF2 support so far**. The CTF held a side event at the 46th Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC46) session at FAO in Rome to **present the outcomes achieved by countries that completed their CTF2 funded projects**. CTF2's results show the **effectiveness and relevance of the Codex Trust Fund**.



IMPACT

Countries that have graduated from CTF2 support have made achievements in strengthening the mechanisms and processes for consultation, communication and management, in addition to enhancements made in knowledge and understanding of Codex work. This has allowed countries to **maximize the use of Codex work at national and international levels** which results in enhanced engagement in Codex thereby contributing to safer food, improving consumer health and access to fair trade.

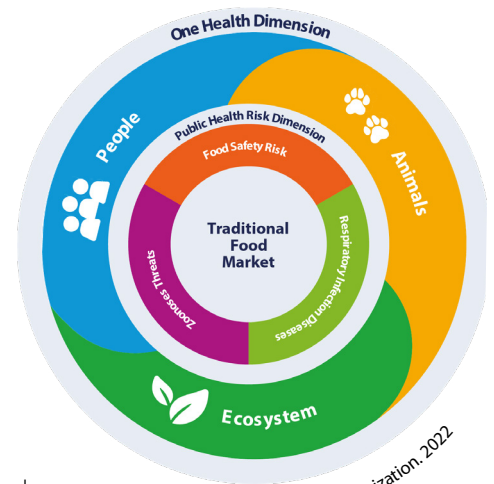
Accessing Safe and Healthy Food



Traditional food markets are integral to communities and are a primary source of affordable fresh foods for many low-income groups and an essential source of livelihood for millions of urban and rural inhabitants worldwide. **Regulated traditional food markets that operate to high standards of hygiene and sanitation are safe for workers and customers.** However, significant problems

can arise due to human-animal interaction that is very common in the markets and from the human-to-human transmission of infectious diseases.

The new **Guideline Development Group (GDG)** met for the first time in November 2023 to update the interim guidance, **Reducing public health risks associated with the sale of live wild animals of mammalian species in traditional food markets**. Funded by the government of the Netherlands and the USDA, the new document will consider the role of food markets for **health security and emergency preparedness in cities and urban settings**.



Source: World Health Organization. 2022

IMPACT

The technical meetings and work towards guidance, **surveillance and implementation will ensure markets are a key place for accessing safe and healthy food.**

LEADING ON GLOBAL NUTRITION AND FOOD SAFETY PRIORITIES



Setting the global health agenda
Ensuring technical excellence
Strengthening external collaboration

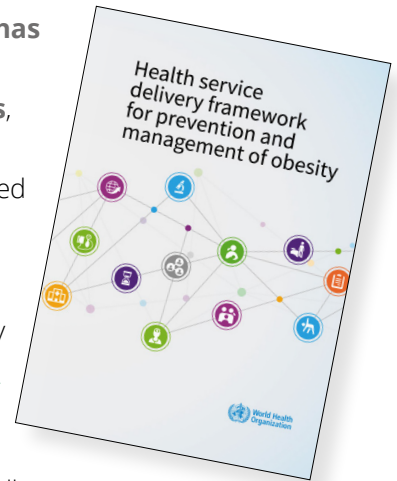


Acceleration plan to stop obesity

Since the 75th World Health Assembly in 2022, Member States adopted new recommendations for the prevention and management of obesity and endorsed the **WHO acceleration plan to stop obesity**. This has been designed to stimulate and support multisectoral country-level action across the globe, drawing on policies that are already tried and tested and based on implementation and delivery science. The plan offers the prospect of a step change in delivery and impact in the effort to tackle the growing crisis of obesity.



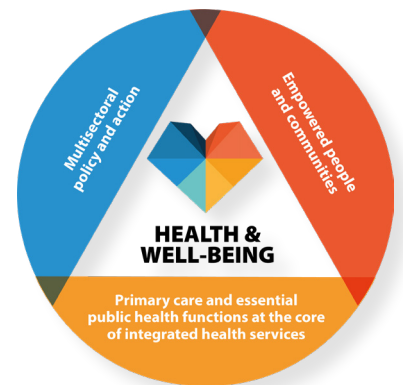
Building on the whole of society and comprehensive recommendations endorsed at the 75th WHA in 2022, **WHO has taken brave decisions on prioritization, simplification, standardization and feasibility around targeted actions**, within our reach to create change, and developed a WHO Technical Package to Stop Obesity consisting of a consolidated set of policies which have been selected based on their proven potential to achieve outcomes.



Also, to build capacity in the health system, to deliver obesity management services, WHO published the **Health service framework for prevention and management of obesity** which offers a way forward to ensure that services to prevent, treat and manage obesity are universally

available, accessible, affordable, and sustainable. The policy brief **A primary health care approach to obesity prevention and management in children and adolescents** was also released which highlights obesity in all age groups, including children and adolescents, as a public health challenge across all settings.

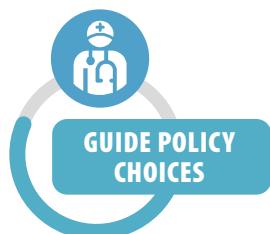
WHO has continued to advance roll-out of tailored support to countries for the implementation of the Acceleration Plan to stop obesity. For example , 12 countries attended the inter-regional workshop which took place in November at WHO Europe Enabling Hub, Istanbul, Türkiye where countries recognized the need for a health system response to the obesity epidemic. Those countries committed to moving quickly to action in a 100-day delivery sprint to show that change is feasible and achievable towards stopping the rise of obesity and possibly decreasing its prevalence across all age groups.



IMPACT

31 frontrunner countries committed to implementing the **WHO acceleration plan to stop obesity.**

GUIDE POLICY CHOICES TO PRIORITIZE NUTRITION AND FOOD SAFETY IN COUNTRIES ON UNSAFE FOOD, UNHEALTHY DIETS AND MALNUTRITION



Nutrition and food safety defined and prioritized in countries

NFS launched the [WHO Global report on sodium intake reduction](#) for the first time. It examines the country's progress in implementing sodium intake reduction policies and their impact on population dietary sodium intake and cardiovascular disease. The report includes a [sodium country scorecard](#) that enables member states to evaluate the type and number of sodium reduction policies they have in place. The scorecard is found within the [WHO Global database on the Implementation of nutrition action \(GINA\)](#) repository of over 3000 policies, actions and mechanisms related to nutrition which was recently updated in 2023.



28% of the global population lives in countries with mandatory measures towards sodium reduction, including the declaration of compulsory sodium. The report highlights that to impact sodium reduction significantly, member states are urged to promptly implement sodium intake reduction policies and mitigate the harmful effects of excessive salt consumption to meet the global target.

IMPACT

In collaboration with the WHO's Behavioral Insights Unit, NFS made a significant impression. Our campaign on reducing sodium intake reached an extensive audience of **323 million users**. The **sodium reduction fact sheet**, updated in 2023, **emerged as the most visited page within the WHO website** newsroom in October, attracting **2.4 million visitors**.



Healthier food environments at sports events

Sports and health go hand in hand. A healthy diet plays a vital part in helping people enjoy sports and healthy lives.

NFS published [Healthier food and healthier food environments at sports events: an action guide for sports event organizers](#) to inspire action towards improving population health and well-being, and to redefine the role that sports events can have in this endeavour. It builds on WHO technical expertise in supporting public food procurement and service policies for a healthy diet and nudges to promote healthy eating in other public settings.



IMPACT

Sports mega-events have high visibility reaching billions of fans worldwide **which offers a powerful opportunity for promoting healthy eating**.



Accelerating Anaemia Reduction

Anaemia remains a persistent global public health concern, particularly for young children and women in low- and middle-income settings. In response to the insufficient progress made in reducing its prevalence, **WHO committed to developing a comprehensive framework for action** to prevent, diagnose and manage anaemia, and agreed to work with UNICEF and partners to establish an **Anaemia Action Alliance** to support the implementation of the framework and drive progress toward national and global goals.

WHO recently published **Accelerating anaemia reduction: a comprehensive framework for**

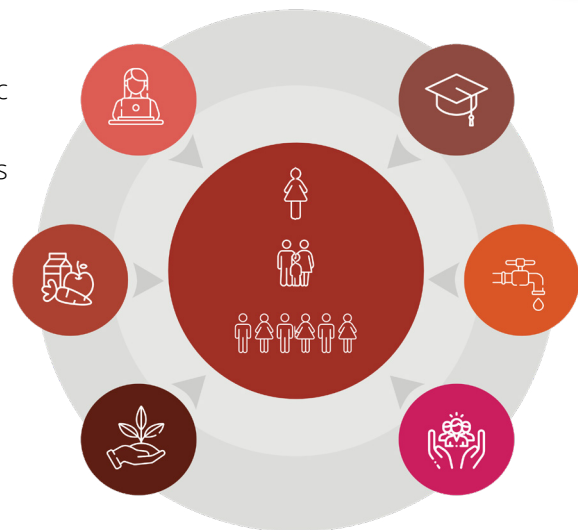
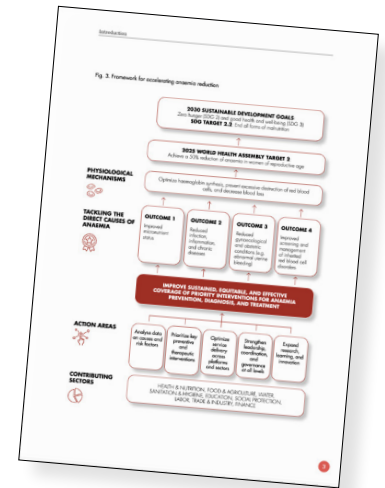
action to promote increased efforts in addressing all causes of anaemia. Iron deficiency has been the most common and widely recognized cause of anaemia, and to date, most work has focused on the prevention and treatment of iron deficiency anaemia.



**ANAEMIA
ACTION
ALLIANCE**

Due to the complexity of anaemia, which stems from various causes such as nutritional deficiencies, infections, inflammation, gynecological and obstetric

issues, and inherited blood disorders, the comprehensive framework was developed through a collaborative effort across different WHO programmes. These departments include **Nutrition and Food Safety, Sexual and Reproductive Health Research, Maternal Newborn Child Adolescent Health Ageing, Global Neglected Tropical Diseases Control Programme,** and **Global Malaria Programme.**



NFS and Alliance members participated in several fora to disseminate the framework, including a webinar on Accelerating anaemia reduction, hosted by the US Government's Global Nutrition Coordination Plan in September.

IMPACT

This framework **acts towards achieving the World Health Assembly targets to reduce anaemia in women of reproductive age**, address key barriers and seize opportunities to reduce the burden of anaemia.

SUPPORT COUNTRY ACTIONS

(PROGRAMME DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT)



SUPPORT COUNTRY ACTIONS

Programme design, policy adoption and adaptation and implementation support

Remarkable milestone for trans fat reduction

Significant progress has been made in the past five years with population coverage of best practice country policies that effectively eliminate industrially produced trans fat (iTFA).

In early 2023, a virtual high-level event took place which included the launch of the [fourth progress report on global trans fat elimination](#).

In their efforts to eliminate iTFAs in food, 53 countries now have best practice policies. [Denmark, Lithuania, Poland, Saudi Arabia and Thailand were awarded validation certificates](#) for having a best-practice iTFA elimination policy effective in the country, as well as adequate monitoring and enforcement systems in place. The next application cycle opens in March 2024.

In November, [Countdown to 2023](#) was published detailing progress of selected international food and beverage companies towards eliminating iTFA's from the global food supply.



WHO / Sergey Volkov

IMPACT

46% of the world's population is now covered by recommended best practice policies to eliminate industrially produced trans fat, as compared to five years ago. **These policies are expected to save approximately 183,000 lives** a year as well as vastly improving the food environment for billions of people.

INFOSAN

In our support of country actions in food safety, **INFOSAN** The International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN) team organized 10 national workshops, 3 sub-regional and 2 regional meetings to enhance the capacity for emergency response related to food safety events, providing support to 73 Member States. Further information about the activities can be found in the [INFOSAN Quarterly Summaries](#).



IMPACT

120+ Member states **alerted through INFOSAN about contaminated food** exported to their country.

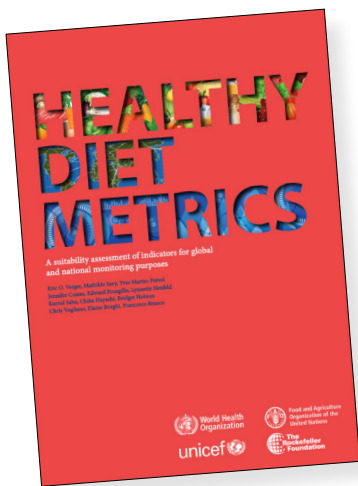
ENHANCE GLOBAL MONITORING AND SURVEILLANCE AND HARMONIZE DATA COLLECTION



Enhance global monitoring and surveillance to inform priority setting and provide guidance on harmonized data collection

Through partnerships and effective teamwork, we continued to expand, streamline and publish monitoring and surveillance data for both nutrition and food safety.

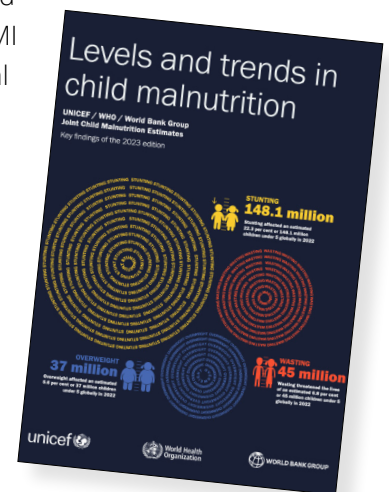
The **Healthy Diets Monitoring Initiative (HDMI)** was launched in collaboration with FAO and UNICEF in collective recognition of unhealthy diets and the associated burden of disease from all forms of malnutrition and the need for action worldwide. The overall objective is to enable national and global monitoring of diet quality to inform policies and programmes across a wide range of sectors. As an important first step of HDMI to respond to the need for developing healthy diet metrics, the **Healthy diet metrics report** was published. This report assesses the validity and usefulness of existing healthy diet metrics as global and national monitoring indicators, presents a comparative assessment of selected healthy diet metrics and discusses priorities and opportunities to improve diet monitoring.



The Technical expert meeting report, **Healthy diets metrics**, includes the discussions and conclusions made on the suitability of existing metrics for the assessment and monitoring of healthy diets nationally and globally. It also includes a workplan roadmap for the HDMI for the next two years towards the development of global guidance on healthy diets metrics.

Levels and trends in child malnutrition

UNICEF, WHO and the World Bank Group published the **Joint child malnutrition estimates: key findings of the 2023 edition**. The assessment revealed that more intensive efforts are required if the world is to achieve the global target of reducing the number of children with stunting to 89 million by 2030.



STUNTING
148.1 million

Stunting affected an estimated 22.3 per cent or 148.1 million children under 5 globally in 2022



WASTING
45 million

Wasting threatened the lives of an estimated 6.8 per cent or 45 million children under 5 globally in 2022



OVERWEIGHT
37 million

Overweight affected an estimated 5.6 per cent or 37 million children under 5 globally in 2022

Whole genome sequencing

Comprehensive guidance was published in 2023 on a laboratory technique that has the potential to change how we detect and monitor microbial hazards in the food chain and manage food safety risks. The report, [Whole genome sequencing as a tool to strengthen foodborne disease surveillance and response](#), was published as three distinct modules.

Module 1

Introductory module

Module 2

whole genome sequencing in foodborne disease outbreak investigations

Module 3

Whole genome sequencing in foodborne disease routine surveillance



In October 2023, WHO launched the extension of the [Global Nutrition Targets Tracking Tool \(GNTTT\)](#), developed by WHO in collaboration with UNICEF and the European Commission, and supported by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, the German development agency and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. **The tool has been expanded to include target monitoring towards 2030**, and its features have been enhanced using WHO's new data management and visualization solution, the WHO World Health Data Hub. The course will demonstrate how to use the extended tool to interpret the current status and explore different scenarios considering different rates of progress for the six targets and the time left to 2025 and 2030.



IMPACT

WHO, UNICEF, and the European Commission have developed an updated version of the Global Nutrition Targets Tracking Tool. This interactive and web-based tool supports national, regional, and global progress assessment towards the **six global nutrition targets on stunting, anaemia in women of reproductive age, low birthweight, childhood overweight, exclusive breastfeeding, and childhood wasting.**



DEPARTMENT OF NUTRITION AND FOOD SAFETY

ACHIEVEMENTS 2023

UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF
ACTION ON NUTRITION
2016-2025



**World Health
Organization**

For more information, please contact:

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World Health Organization

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