The 2021 Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit hosted by the Government of Japan on 7-8 December is an opportunity for governments, donors and organisations make new commitments to investments and actions to secure people’s right to healthy food. The N4G Summit is the culmination of a ‘Nutrition Year of Action’ during the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition.

Many countries are experiencing a double burden of malnutrition where undernutrition coexists with overweight, obesity and/or diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular disease, various types of cancer and type 2 diabetes, with the most vulnerable groups often most affected.

NCDs are a critical barrier to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); they account for 72% of deaths and 75% of health care dollars spent globally. Given the burden NCDs impose on people including disability, out-of-pocket costs, reduced quality of life and that they compromise progress towards other global development targets, governments and relevant stakeholders have committed to act on NCDs. Broadly, malnutrition impedes economic growth by increasing healthcare expenditure and reducing labor productivity due to absenteeism, resulting in foregone national income and entrenching household poverty. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how different forms of malnutrition - including NCDs - increase vulnerability to infectious diseases, and that nutrition security is fragile and vulnerable to food system shocks and disruption.

Effective solutions to improve diets exist, but action, investment and progress is too slow to deliver health benefits for all people, everywhere, and meet global targets.

**This guide can assist NCD civil society to advocate SMART commitments on healthy diets for all, supporting 2021 N4G priorities and global NCD targets.**
Seeking Nutrition Commitments for Health and Growth

Investing in healthy diets for all is a smart, efficient way to benefit health, economic development and environmental sustainability - it is among the best opportunities countries have to improve lives.

Diet related NCDs must be considerations in all efforts to improve nutrition, both in their own rights as well as in a complementary and coherent way; actions on one form of malnutrition (or development challenge) should not undermine other forms of malnutrition (like NCDs).

This guide provides an overview and examples of ‘SMART’ actions and potential commitments and actions for healthy diets relevant to NCD prevention and control.

By actively advocating for NCD-relevant commitments we seek to:

- **Redefine food security** to ensure appropriate, healthy diets for all: ‘nutrition security’, ensuring diet quality which protects health and prevents NCDs and obesity is addressed alongside under-nutrition, deficiencies, and hunger;

- **Urge consideration of efficient, double duty actions** – those which synergistically address multiple forms of malnutrition at once, and enacting and implementation of ‘Best Buys’ for healthy diets.

- **Call for investment in promoting healthy diets for all** – for health promotion; using efficient fiscal measures like levies and excise taxes to reduce use of unhealthy ingredients and raising revenue through taxes for reinvesting into health; to see good nutrition as an investment and poor nutrition as a cost;

- **Apply a human rights lens** in measures to address all forms of malnutrition – concurrently including rights to life, health, water, food, a healthy environment, development, an adequate standard of living, cultural rights, the rights of the child and Indigenous rights.

Governments are off-track to meet global nutrition and NCD targets by 2025 and 2030: Prioritising and investing in nutritious diets for all is essential for long term health and resilience.

Best Buys and other Recommended Interventions for Healthier Diets


Implementation of the Action Plan and at least these measures supports attainment of nine 2025 NCD targets, at least two 2025 Nutrition targets, and SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being, and SDG 2: No Hunger. The list is not exhaustive and governments and organisations are encouraged to adopt measures which are evidence informed in the context of their community needs.

‘Best buys’: cost effectiveness analysis (CEA) ≤ IS$100 per DALY averted in LMICs

- **Reduce salt intake** through the reformulation of food products to contain less salt and the setting of target levels for the amount of salt in foods and meals

- **Reduce salt intake** through the establishment of a supportive environment in public institutions such as hospitals, schools, workplaces and nursing homes, to enable lower sodium options to be provided

- **Reduce salt intake** through behaviour change communication and mass media campaign

- **Reduce salt intake** through the implementation of front-of-pack labelling

Effective interventions with CEA >IS$100 per DALY averted in LMICs

- **Eliminate industrial trans-fats** through the development of legislation to ban their use in the food chain

- **Reduce sugar consumption** through effective taxation on sugar-sweetened beverages

Other Recommended Interventions from WHO Guidance

- **Promote and support exclusive breastfeeding** for the first 6 months of life, including promotion of breastfeeding

- **Implement subsidies** to increase the intake of fruits and vegetables

- **Replace trans-fats and saturated fats** with unsaturated fats through reformulation, labelling, fiscal policies or agricultural policies

- **Limit portion and package size** to reduce energy intake and the risk of overweight/obesity

- **Implement nutrition education and counselling** in different settings (for example, in preschools, schools, workplaces and hospitals) to increase the intake of fruits and vegetables

From: Tackling NCDs: Best Buys and other Recommended Interventions for prevention and control of NCDs https://apps.who.int/nmh/ncd-tools/en

More Inspiration for Actions on the Right to (Healthy) Food

What drives change in your context and community may not be listed above. More potential financial, policy, programmatic, or impact actions for governments, appropriate business, multilateral organisations, donors and other development partners to commit to transform the food system to promote safe, sustainable, and healthy foods for people and planet - including front of pack labelling, marketing restrictions, packages of complementary and ‘double duty’ actions can be found at the N4G website: https://bit.ly/N4GFoodSystemsActionsGuide
Mobilising for Commitments -

What type of advocacy could you do?

- **Digital Advocacy** - Share your asks and messages on social media - use text, photos and videos, tag/use handles of leaders (e.g., ministers of health, trade, agriculture, and heads of state/government) who are on social media, use #N4GSummit2021 and #ActOnNCDs hashtag, and celebrate to motivate leaders. If you have advocated for healthy diets before recycle your messages and materials! The civil Digital Toolkit (see ‘More Information’) has graphics and suggested messages which you can also use and tailor.

- **Media Advocacy** - Contact journalists, write op-eds or blogs, draw attention to your pre-existing advocacy messages and policy briefs on priorities on NCD prevention like marketing restrictions, breastfeeding promotion, sugar sweetened beverage taxes, front of pack labelling, sodium reduction and trans fat replacement.

- **Direct Advocacy** - Write a letter or email or arrange a meeting with policy and decision makers and advisors, set out your asks, use the Best Buys for healthy diets as a starting point and tailor to your context. Discuss your asks and recommendations, understand their plans, and offer your support.

- **Make your own SMART commitment** for nutrition - what will you and your organisation do to address diet related NCDs and other forms of malnutrition?

What could your advocacy include?

- What is the challenge needing solutions (e.g., increasing burden of diet related NCDs)
- What solution (policy action) are you recommending?
- What is an ideal SMART commitment to your organisation and community?
- Can you commend their previous leadership on NCD prevention?
- Is there an inspiring best practice example you have seen elsewhere?
- In the context of the summits this year, and urgency to deliver on targets by 2025 and 2030, what are the immediate steps that need to be taken on your commitment?
- Can you offer your organisation’s ongoing support?

What could your own organisation commit?

**How do you plan to promote healthy diets in your community?**

You could commit to: support government action on Best Buys, exchange knowledge, raise awareness, strengthen evidence base, call out and protect against conflict of interest and industry interference, work with new allies, organise health promotion / nutrition literacy activities, work with other development communities to strengthen consideration and integration of diet related NCDs in their work.

N4G is an opportunity for leaders to announce new initiatives as well as those already planned. N4G is relevant for all forms of malnutrition - including NCDs.

What are SMART Commitments?

**S**pecific:
- Who is the accountable stakeholder? (which agency)
- What are the goals?
- What type of action are they? (eg enabling, policy, impact)
- What is the plan to achieve the impact?
- What geographical area does the commitment cover (city, country, region, demographics?)
- Target population

**M**easurable:
- Primary indicator
- Baseline
- Interim milestones
- End-line
- Monitoring and evaluation plan
- Reporting mechanism

**A**chievable:
- Estimated total costs
- Funding mechanism

**R**elevant:
- What global targets are aligned? (eg WHO’s 2025 Nutrition targets, or 2025 NCD targets, SDG 2 or SDG 3.4 goals and targets?)

**T**ime-bound:
- Commitment period – start and finish timelines

Putting a spotlight on ‘double duty’ actions

**Double-duty actions** include interventions, programmes and policies with the potential to simultaneously reduce the risk or burden of undernutrition and overweight, obesity or diet-related NCDs. Learn more:

https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-NMH-NHD-17.2
Examples of Possible SMART Commitments for Diets and NCDs

Illustrative SMART commitments and actions to tackle malnutrition in all its forms, including NCDs, adapted from Global Nutrition Report Commitment Guide and examples of government actions.

Financial Commitment – investing in healthy diets

[Donor organisation] makes a new commitment to invest additional USD$600 Million, between 2022 - 2026, in country level implementation of Best Buys on unhealthy diets (WHO NCD GAP Appendix III) and other evidence based nutrition measures for NCDs. Of this, US$300 million will focus on interventions in LMICs, USD$200 million will strengthen legislative capacity in governments, and USD$100 Million will support implementation of fiscal measures to reduce intake of free-sugars and raising of domestic revenue for other nutrition programmes. The progress of investment in each of the three goals will be annually reported as disbursement of USD$ using internal monitoring systems, and reporting through GNR, OECD and WHO systems and processes.

Impact Commitment – Sugar reduction

The [country] Department of Nutrition commits to reduce population-level intake of added sugar from 16% energy to less than 10% energy from January 2022 by December 2029, with at least half of that reduction achieved in the first five years. This will be achieved by implementing a mandatory category of ‘specific added sugar’ to reformulation targets for packaged foods and beverages across 15 categories. Progress will be assessed using the National Nutrition Survey conducted every two years. Five million euros have been fully secured by the government (self-funded) to cover associated costs, partially supported via an earmarked sugar-sweetened-beverage tax. Food industry compliance will be assessed through a rigorous monitoring and evaluation plan.

Implement marketing restrictions on ultra processed foods

Undertake community consultation on proposal restricting ultra processed foods (including take away foods with low nutrient profiles) marketing in all media to protect the rights of children to health and a healthy environment, with a view to complete consultation and introduce legislation by July 2023. This will support [country’s] commitments to WHO Nutrition and NCD prevention targets, and contribute to a projected reduction in proportion of ultra processed foods in population diets from 51% to 44% by 2030, a reduction in sodium, trans-fat, saturated fat and sugar intake by at least 10% respectively by 2030, and reduction in prevalence of diet related NCDs. Monitoring of the ultra processed food marketing and application of penalties will be undertaken by an independent body established under the 2020 National Health Improvement Strategy, and retail sales data and health statistics will verify population level diet profiles, micronutrient intake and chronic disease prevalence.

Legislate a package of measures on ultra processed foods

The legislative branch of [country] will introduce and pass a law to implement octagonal front of pack warning labels on packages of ultra processed foods with high levels of fats, sodium and sugars (HFSS), with a goal of reducing intake of these products by 30% by 2025, and contributing to SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition by 2030. The laws would also apply warnings to products containing artificial sweeteners and caffeine with the legend “not recommended for children”. The law bans the use of any type of claim on packages of products where a warning label is applied, regulates marketing of HFSS products to children, and bans their sale and/or provision in schools. The law will be regulated and monitored by the Ministry of Health.

Further considerations for commitments

- Does the commitment fit one of the three focus areas: UHC, Food Systems transformation (most NCD ones fit here), or resiliency and fragile and conflict contexts.
- Does the pledge improve the current policy and enabling environment and/or increase scale, scope, or ambition of programming?
- Does the pledge include women and under-represented groups (e.g., youth, women, and girls) in development and planning to reach the most marginalised groups, or plan to?
- If the pledge includes a financial commitment, is this new money? Does the pledge include a plan to raise and disburse those finances?
- If the pledge includes a policy commitment, is this a new or improved policy? Does the pledge include a plan to finance this policy?
- Is the pledge cost-effective (in line with economic models and evidence)?
- Is the pledge aligned with:
  - SDG targets 2.2 (malnutrition in all its forms) and 3.4 (noncommunicable diseases - NCDs);
  - WHA targets on undernutrition, breastfeeding, NCDs, and/or obesity; or ICN2 Framework for Action on Nutrition

More Information

Example for types of commitments on the Global Nutrition Report website

- Actions by category and type: https://globalnutritionreport.org/065f84#section-3
- Detailed examples: https://globalnutritionreport.org/resources/naf/smart-commitments

Nutrition For Growth commitment guide


WHO tools and resources relating to healthy diet solutions and action on NCDs

http://www.who.int/nmh/ncd-tools/en

WHO Food Systems for Health Information Briefs

https://www.who.int/initiatives/food-systems-for-health

Policy brief published by NCDA and WCRF in 2017 provides more relevant examples of SMART commitments and case studies http://wcrf.org/SMART

Next Steps

The Nutrition for Growth Summit will be held on 7-8 December 2021.

1. Learn more and register to virtually attend the N4G summit – https://www.nutritionforgrowth.org
3. Advocate for others to make commitments (through digital, media, and direct advocacy)
5. Track commitments through the NAF and hold pledgees to account for commitments made – https://globalnutritionreport.org/resources/nutrition-growth-commitment-tracking/