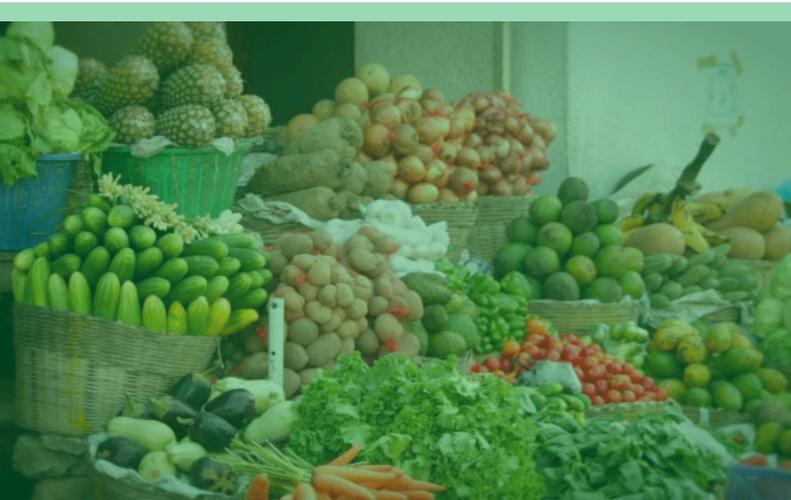




AFRICAN UNION 2022 YEAR OF NUTRITION: STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE IN NUTRITION AND FOOD SECURITY ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT

Nutrition and Food Security Dialogue Series

*Organized by AKADEMIYA2063 and the Senegalese National Council for
Nutrition Development (CNDN)*



October 6, 2022

Dialogue #4: “Africa’s Rapid Urbanization and Growing Middle Class: Challenges and Opportunities to Achieving Healthier Diets and Optimal Nutrition”



Background

Good nutrition is essential for human and socio-economic development. Investments in nutrition, particularly in the first 1,000 days of a child's life, help prevent lifelong effects of malnutrition, enable children to have better health and education outcomes, and contribute to improved economic outcomes. The 2007-2008 global food price crisis raised awareness of the need to improve nutrition in order to achieve international, regional, and national development and growth targets, as well as the need for a concerted effort to address the triple burden of malnutrition (undernutrition, micronutrient deficiency, and overweight and obesity).

In Africa, the awareness generated strong resolve at the highest political levels, which resulted in several new nutrition initiatives and the incorporation of nutrition into major development agendas. For example, in 2013, the African Union Commission (AUC) launched the cost of hunger studies in Africa to quantify the social and economic impacts of child undernutrition; in 2018, the African Development Bank and AUC set up the African Leaders for Nutrition Initiative and followed suit with a Continental Accountability Scorecard in 2019 to highlight country and continental progress on achieving nutrition targets. A total of 40 African countries are now part of the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement launched in 2010 to apply multi-sectoral nutrition-sensitive approaches in addressing malnutrition. Furthermore, the commitment to address malnutrition has been echoed in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and World Health Assembly Nutrition Targets, as well as in various African strategies and agendas, including the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063, the AU African Regional Nutrition Strategy (2015-2025), the 2014 Malabo Declaration, and national development strategies and investment plans.

Africa has made remarkable progress in reducing hunger and malnutrition since the mid-1990s and saw steady declines in the prevalence of undernourishment, child stunting, child underweight, and child wasting, particularly between 2008 and 2014. However, since 2017, there has been a reversal in the declining trend in undernourishment. The rising undernourishment and still high levels of child malnutrition have been attributed to several factors, including economic volatility, conflicts, climate change, and more frequent weather extremes. The COVID-19 pandemic has further threatened to reverse nutritional gains and exposed vulnerabilities in Africa's economic, health, and food systems alike, adding a projected 46.2 million more undernourished people. Meanwhile, the ongoing Ukraine-Russia war is expected to exacerbate food insecurity in countries highly dependent on imports from Russia and Ukraine through import disruptions and rising global agricultural commodity and input prices.

In addition, Africa faces rising trends in overweight and obesity among children, youth, and adults that are associated with a growing middle class and rapid urbanization on the continent. If no measures are taken to reverse these trends, one in five adults and one in 10 children and adolescents are projected to be obese by the end of 2023 in 10 high-burden African countries.



In light of the COVID-19 pandemic that has exposed pinch points in Africa's health and food systems and is threatening to reverse Africa's gains in combating malnutrition, the AU has designated 2022 as the Year of Nutrition in order to advocate for greater financing, implementation capacity, and coordination in strengthening the resilience of Africa's food security and nutrition.

Objectives

In support of the AU's 2022 Year of Nutrition, AKADEMIYA2063 and the Senegalese National Council for Nutrition Development (CNDN) will organize a series of continental level dialogues on nutrition and food security with a broad group of stakeholders, including policymakers, civil society organizations, farmers' organizations, research institutions, the private sector, and development partners, to facilitate knowledge exchange, mutual learning, and drive necessary action toward achieving continental and global food security and nutrition targets.

Specific objectives of the nutrition and food security dialogues are to highlight the following:

1. Africa's progress, challenges, successes, and opportunities in achieving nutrition and food security outcomes and targets;
2. Critical and emerging areas that need to be addressed in order to effectively improve food security, dietary quality, and nutritional outcomes on the African continent; and
3. Potential solutions to challenges and required policies and investments to accelerate and sustain the achievement of nutritional and food security goals in Africa.

Topics for Dialogue Series

AKADEMIYA2063 and CNDN will organize a series of five dialogues covering the following pertinent topics:

1. Africa's progress toward meeting nutrition and food security targets, successes, challenges, and lessons learned, including the importance of applying a food systems lens and multi-sectoral approaches to addressing hunger and malnutrition
2. The role of trade and food safety in advancing nutrition and food security objectives and the need for policy alignment
3. Impacts of the Russia-Ukraine War on Nutrition, Food Security, and Poverty in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities to Building Resilient Food Systems
4. Africa's Rapid Urbanization and Growing Middle Class: Challenges and Opportunities to Achieving Healthier Diets and Optimal Nutrition
5. Balancing nutrition goals with climate and environmental goals, shifting to more sustainable consumption patterns, and building resilience in nutrition and food security



Nutrition and Food Security Dialogue #4

October 6, 2022

Africa's Rapid Urbanization and Growing Middle Class: Challenges and Opportunities to Achieving Healthier Diets and Optimal Nutrition

Africa is urbanizing rapidly. Its urban population is expected to more than triple between 2010 and 2050, from 395 million to 1.34 billion people, while over half of its population is expected to live in urban areas by 2050. And strong economic growth starting in the early 2000s helped to reduce poverty and increase the size of the continent's middle class. In fact, Africa's middle class more than doubled between 1990 and 2010 and is projected to rise from 34 percent of its population in 2010 to 42 percent in 2060. Increasing urbanization and incomes and the rise of a middle class have enabled the growth of small and medium food processing enterprises and contributed to dietary changes on the continent characterized by a greater consumption of calorie-dense and animal-source foods as well as higher shares of processed foods in food purchases in both urban and rural areas. The dietary changes have been significant drivers of growing overweight and obesity and related non-communicable diseases such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and coronary heart disease. In addition, nutrition transitions—shifts in diets as well as changes in physical activity and body composition—are happening more rapidly and at earlier stages of economic development in developing countries than was previously the case in other regions.

Today, Africa faces rising trends in overweight and obesity among children, youth, and adults. By December 2023, the prevalence of obesity among adults in 10 high-burden African countries is expected to range from 13.6 to 31 percent, while in children and adolescents it will range from 5 to 16.5 percent. In 2021, 25 African countries were off track to meet the World Health Assembly target of having no increase in childhood overweight while no country was on track to halt the rise in adult obesity. Furthermore, obesity and diet-related chronic diseases have been associated with greater vulnerability to COVID-19. All this has compounded the scale of malnutrition that African countries face as they have to deal with the triple burden of malnutrition—the co-existence of undernutrition with overnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. It has also resulted in significant healthcare costs and productivity losses to individuals and society as a whole.

Dialogue #4 will allow participants to review recent trends and patterns in urbanization, dietary changes, and the growing overweight and obesity levels in Africa. Participants will also reflect on the causes and consequences of the shifts in dietary patterns as well as challenges and opportunities to achieving healthier diets and optimal nutrition. The dialogue will explore the required priority actions including policy and regulatory options for urgently addressing malnutrition in all its forms and for promoting healthier diets and lifestyles especially in key sectors like health, agriculture, and urban planning.

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