

COP26: Side Event
For tackling climate, environmental, nutrition and health challenges,
we shall all meet at the table

Tuesday, 9 November 2021
11:15am to 12:15pm (GMT)

Organizers: UN Nutrition (comprised of 16 UN agencies at the global level and several more in countries), WFP, WHO and Switzerland.

Our common challenge

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time, if not the greatest. In addition to affecting weather events, temperatures and sea levels, climate change is influencing how, where, and how much food is produced. This, in turn, is increasing nutrition and food security vulnerabilities, and comprising the health and well-being of billions.

On the other hand, current dietary patterns and food production practices are unsustainable and contributing to adverse environmental impacts. Shifts to more animal-based diets could raise agriculture and food GHG emissions by as much as 80% by 2050, and could even exceed total permissible emissions by 2070.¹ Furthermore, decreases in rainfalls and increases in temperature were shown to be associated with lower consumption of unprocessed foods but higher consumption of ultra-processed foods, especially in tropical regions. This causes reason for concern given that the latter are often unhealthy and obesogenic foods sold in packaging, posing other environmental challenges. Furthermore, emerging data highlights the possibility of a vicious cycle by which climate modifies diet and leads to changes in food demand that in turn promote climate change.²

The co-benefits of low emission healthy diets from sustainable food systems are clear and there are several opportunities for joint action on nutrition, health, and climate policy. Examples include increasing the consumption of aquatic foods from sustainable systems, introducing sustainability considerations in national food-based dietary guidelines, the integration of food consumption and nutrition considerations into climate adaptation and mitigation planning and financing, and many more.

Objectives

In this side-event, UN Nutrition will call upon UNFCCC negotiators to:

1. Raise awareness of UNFCCC negotiators on the crucial linkages between nutrition, health, food systems, and climate change and the OneHealth approach to tackle them.
2. Ensure improving nutrition is at the heart of UNFCCC negotiations.

¹ Popp et al. 2010; Hedenus et al. 2014; Springmann et al. 2016b; Tilman and Clark 2014 as cited in UNSCN discussion paper above. .

² Nancy Lopez-Olmedo et al, Climate Trends and Consumption of Foods and Beverages by Processing Level in Mexican Cities. Front. Nutr., 21 July 2021 | <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnut.2021.647497>



3. Scale up actions that promote health diets from sustainable production practices to successfully reduce the impacts of food production on climate change, and of climate change on malnutrition, increasing community resilience.
4. Ensure that climate change mitigation actions will not undermine the ability of poor people to adequately feed themselves.
5. Prioritize actions targeting the marginalized and most vulnerable, particularly pregnant and lactating women, infants and young children, indigenous people, youth, and the poor.

Expected results

The heightened awareness and knowledge shared through this side event will help UNFCCC negotiators to:

- build bridges across the health, environmental, social, and economic dimensions;
- develop synergies and alliances to ensure that political will, financial resources and human efforts are optimised through integrated and collaborative action;
- act on curbing subsidies and redirecting investments for agriculture towards diversified, low emissions foods for healthy diets;
- adopt human rights approaches, particularly the right to adequate food, the right to health and the right to water, to guide efforts to address climate change and achieve sustainable development.

Since nutrition is linked to all SDGs, it is uniquely positioned to accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda. Working as “one UN” is the only possible way to support countries in building effective partnerships, fostering coordination, and implementing policies and programs at scale to ensure a brighter future for their people.

How does this event contribute to any of the 5 thematic areas of the [COP26 Health Programme](#)?

Nutrition and health are closely linked. Changes in nutrition status are expected to affect general health; conversely changes in the health status and sector can have significant effects on individual nutritional status. The proposed event therefore dialogues with all thematic areas of the COP26 Health Programme. In addition, the event is expected to complement another WHO led side event (co-hosted by UN Nutrition) at the health pavilion, focusing on healthy diets in SIDS and bring light to two of the recently established UN Food Systems Summit coalitions for (1) Healthy Diets and (2) Aquatic Foods.

How does this event contribute to any of the 5 priority areas of the COP26 Presidency?

Nutrition is cross-cutting. It therefore contributes to and interconnects all 5 thematic areas of COP26 Presidency.

