Enabling 9 billion people to feed themselves with REAL FOOD for individual & planetary health

Merete Johansson, Chief, CRD-Gva, OCHA, September 2017
Food, health and planetary sustainability are inextricably linked.

- The 3 agendas are interdependent and impact on humanitarian action, yet are approached in silos - the need for consolidated and transformative action is urgent.
- Humanitarian actors should push for coordinated action through ongoing processes: SDGs, World Humanitarian Summit follow-up, UN Climate Change Conference, UN Decade for Action on Nutrition.
- Today’s food systems, production & consumption, are unsustainable in every way (food, health, planet) and contributing to growing humanitarian requirements.
- Problems need to be addressed at the source: Rebalancing the earth’s ecosystem.
How does this relate to the humanitarian agenda?

- Environmental shocks/stresses (e.g. extreme weather events or pest outbreaks) due to unsustainable food systems
- Climate refugees
- Health effects of environmental deterioration (e.g. infectious disease)
- Food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms
- Food safety (Pesticide leakage, Anti-Microbial Resistance now global acute threat)
- Civil unrest due to resource crisis
- Nutrition transition to processed food consumption => Non-communicable diseases (NCDs)
The need for transforming our food systems has never been so urgent.

- Scientists estimate we have a max. of 13 years to transform the food system & slow down global warming or face irreversible consequences (current trajectory may lead to increase of 4°C).

- Unhealthy diets are currently the leading cause of death and driving up non communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular disease, cancer and diabetes.

- Time is running out:
  - For our planet which is rapidly being exploited beyond what it can bear.
  - For the health of our children, increasingly being affected by overweight/obesity (and in SSA absolute numbers of undernourishment of children is rising).
  - For the 9 billion who will need adequate & healthy food in the next 20-30 years.

Diet & health, climate change, agriculture and food production are all managed under separated agendas.

- Humanitarian system should be concerned and advocate for a strategic approach that involves rebalancing the planetary ecosystem as part of its efforts to promote collective action (within Grand Bargain and New Way of Working work streams).

- Why?
  - Humanitarian cost of addressing consequences of Climate Change and unsustainable agricultural practices is rising.
  - Vulnerable populations will bear the brunt of inaction.
  - We need a wider range vision of mitigation and prevention that actively promotes health and food system sustainability as integral to food security, including meeting the Zero Hunger Challenge.
If we get it right on food systems, we can meet the zero hunger challenge within the boundaries of our planet.

- Current food systems are unsustainable.
- Global demand for food is on the rise, driven by unprecedented growth in the world’s population and widespread shifts in consumption patterns as countries develop.
- A scientific model shows that “business as usual” could lead to catastrophic food shortage by the year 2040.
- Exploitation of the planet during the past two generations is unprecedented.
- Enabling 9 billion people to feed themselves, healthily, within planetary boundaries requires urgent measures.
- A drastic transformation of the food system is required if we are to meet the SDGs 2, 3, 12 and 13 (relating to zero hunger, health, sustainable consumption, climate change).

Source: Lloyd’s Emerging Risk Report, 2015; UNSCN, Sustainable Diets for Healthy People and a Healthy Planet, August 2017
If we get it right on diet, we get it right on health.

- Exclusively breastfeeding the first 6 months of age protects against under-nutrition as well as obesity and non-communicable diseases.

- Currently, many populations do not have access to healthy diets.

- Multiple forms of malnutrition co-exist with high rates of child undernutrition, anemia among women, and both child and adult obesity.

- Globally, more than 1/3 of young children suffer from some form of malnutrition.

- While 815 million people are hungry, over 2 billion people are overweight or obese. Malnutrition has become a global problem.

- In 2016, 41 million children < 5 years old were overweight.

- Overweight and obesity are major risk factors for many NCDs (cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes).

- NCDs represent the leading causes of death and illness worldwide and contribute to social inequities.

Ultra-Processed Food: Have we been a 50-year experiment by the food industry that failed?*

- Consumption of processed food and sweets has doubled to one third of the total food consumption in the US.*
- Out of the 600,000 items in the American food supply, 74% have added sugar and 4,000 packaged items have salt 50% higher than official regulations.*
- This nutrition transition has globally spread due to the availability of cheap energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods in low and middle income countries, which has increased the prevalence of obesity in diverse regions such as Latin America, Asia and the Pacific Islands.

![Graph showing US sugar consumption, 1822-2005](#)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Breakdown Of Money Spent On Groceries</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meats (31.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits &amp; Vegetables (14.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grains &amp; Baked Goods (13.2%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dairy Products (13.2%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Processed Foods &amp; Sweets (11.6%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beverages (11.0%)</td>
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<td>Other Foods 5.3%</td>
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| 2012                                 |
| Meats (21.5%)                        |
| Fruits & Vegetables (14.5%)          |
| Grains & Baked Goods (14.4%)         |
| Dairy Products (16.5%)               |
| Processed Foods & Sweets (22.9%)     |
| Beverages (11.1%)                    |
| Other Foods 5.1%                     |

Source: Future diets Implications for agriculture and food prices. Sharada Keats and Steve Wiggins 2014. Diet, food supply and obesity in the Pacific WHO 2003. (*) Extract from the Stockholm Food Forum 2015 seminar by Dr. Robert Lustig, Professor of Pediatrics in the Division of Endocrinology and Director of the Weight Assessment for Teen and Child Health (WATCH) Program at UCSF.
What’s wrong with ultra-processed food?

- Ultra-Processed Food has:
  - Not enough Fiber, Omega-3 fatty acids and Micronutrients.
  - Too much **TRANS-FATS**, Additives, **SALT** and **SUGAR**.

- Too much **saturated fats** and **trans-fats** in the diet contributes to heart disease.

- Regular and low-fat processed food is often rich in **SALT** and **SUGAR**.

- **SUGAR** is addictive and drives eating habits.

- The huge increase in consumption of **SUGAR** directly contributes to increased cases of tooth decay, and is a risk factor for unhealthy weight gain and the associated diseases: metabolic syndrome, obesity, diabetes, cancer and heart disease. (Basu et al.2013 PlosOne and Yang et al. 2014 JAMA).

- **SALT** increases the risk of cardiovascular diseases.
If we get it right on agricultural practices and preserving the ecosystem, we get it right on planetary sustainability.

- Current agricultural practices, increasingly dominated by large industry, contribute to Global Warming and biodiversity loss.

- Agriculture, Forestry and Livestock are responsible for at least $1/3$ of global GHG emissions (one of the largest contributors)

- Processed and low-nutrient food is quickly making its way into middle-income developing nations, with huge health and nutrition impact. The interest of vulnerable populations and markets need to be safe-guarded.

Source: IPCC Fifth Assessment Report 2014
Temperatures will continue to rise with dramatic consequences if we continue a business as usual approach.

- Current GHG emissions will increase global temperatures by 4°C by the end of the century.
- Temperature increase of 4°C could produce larger risks to global and regional food security and compromise normal human activities, including growing food or working outdoors in some areas for parts of the year.
- Monoculture is eroding our food system and making farmers more vulnerable to the impact of climate change leading to growing number of disasters (e.g. varieties of rice grown have dramatically decreased over the years).
- Mitigation of GHG emissions (by cutting use of fossil fuel and improving food systems) could reduce rise in temperature.
- Moving from the current linear economy to a more efficient and circular economy that recognizes the finite nature of resources to use them in a more efficient way.
- As temperature rises, likelihood of devastating events increases, and weather becomes unstable.

Natural disasters and humanitarian consequences are on the rise; Climate change will further aggravate this.

- Growing displacement of populations.
- Increasing humanitarian aid requirements have quadrupled over the past decade.
- Current annual requirements at almost US$24.1 billion, of which only 38% had been met as of August.
- Eroding resilience of communities.
- Competition of scarce resources leads to further conflicts and displacement.
- Crisis of under-funding of humanitarian operations and dwindling resource availability for development operations.

Humanitarian perspective of global nutrition and climate change challenges.

- **Drought in Somalia:**
  - Famine risk remains high
  - Large-scale crop failure and high levels of livestock deaths are occurring
  - Over 100,000 people treated for Severe Acute Malnutrition

- **Mudslides in Sierra Leone:**
  - 10,000 people displaced
  - Response focused on linking food security to longer term agricultural development

- **Disaster in the Caribbean:**
  - Three hurricanes and an earthquake caused massive destruction to Caribbean nations this fall
  - Thousands of people evacuated from at-risk areas
  - Large scale damages to agriculture, water supply, and telecommunications

Source: Reliefweb 2017.
Nutritional challenges during and after humanitarian crises

- Humanitarian crises strike the economy, food security and nutrition of affected areas.
- The urgency of humanitarian action may overlook long term nutritional goals.
- Countries emerging from humanitarian crises are more vulnerable to processed food (e.g.: monoculture system & greater purchasing power in Zambia is leading to a double burden of stunting & obesity).
- The new face of Hunger: Impoverishment of people induces changes in eating habits to consume less fruits and vegetables and more cheaper processed foods (EUFIC Review 2005 and NatGeo: The new face of Hunger 2015).

Shift toward cash aid could lead to:
- Opportunity to promote healthier eating habits.
- Risk of people buying cheap processed foods.

Shortage in food aid could lead to unmet nutritional goals during crises. Especially in the presence of weak local food systems.

Humanitarian actions may disrupt local food economy (e.g.: Haiti after earthquake, collapse of rice market) and food industry may exploit vulnerability by promoting harmful products (e.g.: breastfeeding versus milk formula).
The right to a healthy diet during and after humanitarian crises.

- Tackling poverty, food and nutrition insecurity by enhancing the resilience of communities and livelihoods are not only development priorities. They are also central to the humanitarian agenda.

- In every situation, people should have access to a healthy diet.

Possible ways Forward:

- Move from Good Practices to Guidelines of Healthy Diet in Humanitarian crises.

- When possible, promote local and regional farming and food systems to meet daily nutrition needs with fresh food.

- Build resilience by improving infrastructure (markets, storage, transport hubs) and promoting urban agriculture (e.g.: FAO project on urban horticulture).

Examples of initiatives.

- Bangladesh: Investing in smallholders and food security
- Brazil: National Program of School Nutrition (PNAE) that promotes the use of local small-scale agriculture to feed children at schools.
- China: Research, policies and pilot programs promote agricultural adaptation and mitigation.
- Kenya: Improving smallholders' market access and production efficiency.
- Mexico: tax on sugary drinks has decreased consumption.
- China: JUCCCE program “Kids as Food Heroes, a New Way to Eat in China”
Humanitarian assistance, food agenda and SDGs are connected.


- Sustainable and diverse agriculture is key to early recovery and reducing dependency.

- Food, health and environment agencies must not work in silos. Strong coordination between humanitarian and development agendas is key to reverse current trends.

- Investing in nutrition is investing in development; it creates healthier, smarter and more productive people (Position paper and key messages Humanitarian concerns in the post-2015 development agenda OCHA).

- Poor Diet is one of the main drivers of NCDs, which account for most deaths in the world (WHO and Global Nutrition Report 2014).

- Reducing stunting, overweight and obesity will contribute to lower NCDs burden and morbidity from infectious diseases (Global Nutrition Report 2014).

- Food Systems should provide year-round access to foods that cover people’s nutrient needs and promote healthy dietary practices (ICN2, 2014).
Humanitarian assistance, food agenda and SDGs are connected.

- Inefficiencies in food supply chains have a negative impact on the environment, lower productivity and waste food (Commission on Sustainable Agriculture and Climate Change 2011).

- Moving to a model of circular economy with emphasis on local production will increase sustainability.

- A multi-dimensional approach to sustainability (political, social, economic, and environmental) will encourage accountability to affected populations and help them build livelihoods more resilient to disaster and conflict (Position paper and key messages Humanitarian concerns in the post-2015 development agenda OCHA).

- Food and agriculture are tied to the causes and effects of climate change and environmental degradation and impact social and economic resilience (Position paper and key messages Humanitarian concerns in the post-2015 development agenda OCHA).

- Lower mortality leads to lower fertility over the longer term, reducing population pressure on environmental resources (Global Nutrition Report 2014).

- Current farming and practices, including land clearing and inefficient use of fertilizers and organic residues, make agriculture and livestock production significant contributors to GHG emissions (Commission on Sustainable Agriculture and Climate Change 2011).
What is real food?

There’s no single definition, but is associated with:

- Food which truly nourishes producers, communities and the Earth.
- Food Systems – from seed to plate – that fundamentally respect human dignity and health, animal welfare, social justice and environmental sustainability.
- Food that is as close as its natural and original state without any alteration of any kind.

Source: Real Food Challenge Organization; Eatgood4life.
What constitutes a healthy diet?

- **For Infants and Young Children:**
  - Infants should be breastfed exclusively during the first 6 months of life, and then continue breastfeeding until 2 years of age and beyond.
  - From 6 months of age, breast milk should be complemented with a variety of adequate, safe and nutrient dense complementary foods with no added salt and sugars.

- **For Adults:**
  - Eat a variety of unprocessed and fresh foods including staple foods, legumes, vegetables, fruit and foods from animal sources to protect against malnutrition in all its forms and non-communicable diseases including diabetes, heart disease, stroke and cancer.
  - At plenty of vegetables and fruits every day (min.5 portions).
  - Less than 10% of total energy intake from free sugars. Most free sugars are added to foods or drinks by the manufacturer, cook or consumer, and can also be found in sugars naturally present in honey, syrups, fruit juices and fruit juice concentrates.
  - Moderate amounts of fats and oils. Less than 30% of total energy intake from fats, shifting from saturated to unsaturated fats. Industrial trans fats found in processed food are not part of a healthy diet.
  - Less than 5 g of per day to prevent hypertension and reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke in adult population.

What does a healthy food system look like?

- There is no single definition of a healthy and sustainable food system, but these are desirable qualities for every food system:
  - Industrial food system countries must increase fresh food consumption and rebalance protein sources away from certain animal sources in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, land and water degradation, and chronic disease risk.
  - Mixed food system countries must reduce packaged food consumption.
  - Transitioning food system countries must improve agricultural productivity while improving production diversity.
  - Emerging food system countries must employ policies to reduce the double burden of malnutrition through more affordable healthy food in a manner that does not further threaten the environment.
  - Rural food system countries must focus on improving agricultural productivity and food security.

Possible way forward:

- Leadership at global level to develop integrated strategy in accordance with SDGs & rally those with influence.

- Identify effective platforms for launching a campaign aimed at transforming the food systems in terms of each system’s needs.

- Strengthen coordination between and within UN, Regional Bodies, Governments, NGOs, Foundations, Think Tanks, Researchers and Donors.

- Use Globally adopted recommendations from SDGs, ICN2 and Global Nutrition Report 2015 as a basis for action.

- Mobilize strong advocates and influential change makers from science, academia, industry and UN to promote change.

- Work with regulatory bodies to establish and enforce regulation on the food industry using universally adopted guidelines (WHO/FAO).

- Develop global dietary guidelines which can be adapted to national contexts.
Food: why is it so important?

- It’s what keeps us alive and makes us sick, including our precious planet... Let’s act now before it’s too late.

- Leading scientists and Think-Tanks on Resilience and Food, have named the Food Agenda as the “make-it/break-it agenda for humanity”.

- Real food agenda touches us all, globally. Let’s work to address it together as a matter of urgency.
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