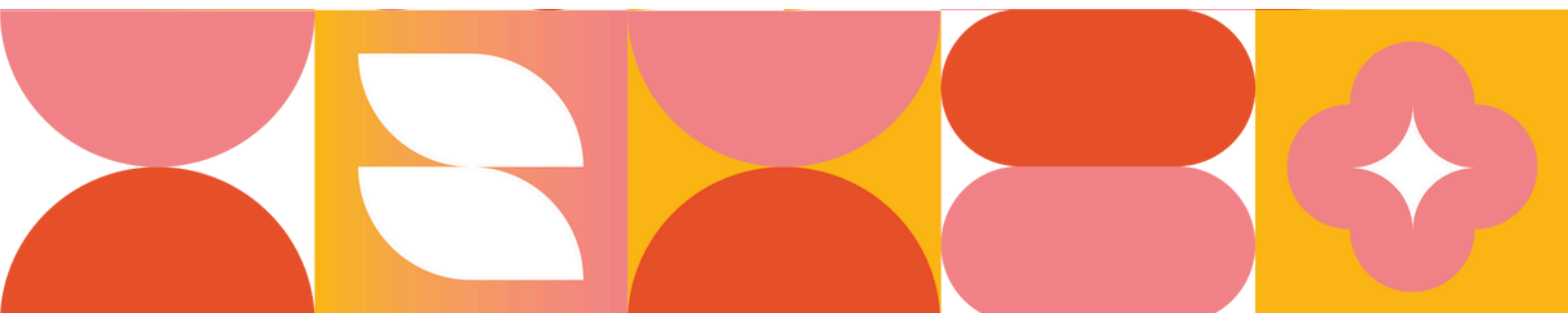


OUTCOME DOCUMENT

# Understanding the role of nutrition and healthy diets in agrifood systems transformation



## Introduction

The World Food Forum (WFF) Youth Assembly, in collaboration with the SUN Civil Society Network, Act4Food and McGill Youth Advisory Delegation, with the support from WFF Young Scientists Group, hosted a global capacity-building session on “Understanding the role of nutrition and healthy diets in agrifood systems transformation”. Held on 11 August 2025 virtually, the event gathered over 200 youth leaders, policymakers and experts to discuss how nutrition and healthy diets can transform the agrifood systems.

The session introduced young people to the **core principles of healthy diets** as defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), emphasizing their role in shaping sustainable and equitable agrifood systems. Healthy diets—adequate, balanced, moderate and diverse—were explored as essential to improving public health outcomes, preventing malnutrition and non-communicable diseases and advancing global sustainability goals.

The event highlighted **youth-led initiatives and advocacy approaches**, offering participants both conceptual grounding and practical entry points for engaging in community-based action and global policy dialogues.

## The consultative process

The session was structured as a **capacity-development dialogue**, combining expert presentations, youth-led initiatives, interactive tools and regional breakout discussions. It began with an **icebreaker** using Mentimeter, encouraging participants to share their perceptions of healthy diets and reflect on cultural food practices. This was followed by a series of **presentations** from youth leaders and experts, introducing FAO/WHO principles of healthy diets and emphasizing their role in transforming agrifood systems.

To reinforce learning, an **interactive Kahoot quiz** engaged participants in testing their knowledge of nutrition concepts, common barriers and system-level implications. The session also featured **youth-led initiative showcases**, from Youth Assembly Partner Organizations, which provided practical examples of how young people are already advancing nutrition advocacy and agrifood systems change.



The core of the session was the regional breakout discussions, where participants from Latin America and the Caribbean and North America; Near East and North Africa and Africa (NENA); and Asia and the –Pacific (APAC) and Europe and Central Asia reflected on how healthy diets are understood in their contexts, the challenges communities face in accessing them and the kinds of support required to overcome barriers. These small-group exchanges created space for peer-to-peer learning, contextual insights and collaborative problem-solving, ensuring that diverse voices and realities were captured.

Finally, the session reconvened in plenary, where rapporteurs presented highlights from each breakout group, followed by a closing call to action urging youth to take forward the knowledge gained into advocacy, community engagement and policy dialogue. The consultative approach ensured that participants not only received technical knowledge but also contributed actionable insights and policy-oriented recommendations rooted in their lived experiences.

## Key themes identified by youth

### 1. Defining healthy diets across regions

- Youth emphasized the importance of **locally adapted and culturally relevant diets**, integrating both traditional foods and modern nutrition knowledge;
- In **Latin America and the Caribbean**, traditional and organic foods were seen as central to healthy diets;
- In **North America**, youth prioritized minimizing processed foods;
- In **Africa and NENA**, diets were described around staples (grains, legumes, vegetables) and linked closely with active lifestyles; and
- In **APAC and Europe and Central Asia**, plant-based diets, Mediterranean diets and locally sourced seasonal foods were highlighted.

**Recommendation:** Promote culturally appropriate, diverse and context-specific definitions of healthy diets to ensure inclusivity and sustainability.

### 2. Barriers to accessing healthy diets

Across regions, youth identified recurring barriers:

- **Affordability and food prices:** Rising food costs limit access to fresh and nutritious foods;
- **Availability and infrastructure:** Rural areas face challenges with market access, storage and transport;
- **Food literacy and education:** Low awareness about nutrition, especially among children and youth, contributes to unhealthy food habits;



- **Influence of processed foods:** Proliferation of processed and fast foods undermines healthy diet choices;
- **Environmental and political instability:** Conflicts, climate change and weak food safety regulation restrict access in many countries; and
- **Time and lifestyle constraints:** Urban populations increasingly rely on convenience foods.

#### Recommendations:

- Scale up nutrition education in schools and communities;
- Strengthen infrastructure and policy measures to improve affordability and accessibility; and
- Regulate food marketing and labelling to counter misleading practices.

### 3. Support needed by communities

Youth proposed several priority actions:

- **Nutrition education and literacy:** Develop practical programmes, including cooking demonstrations, to improve understanding of healthy diets;
- **Policy support and regulation:** Governments should strengthen food security policies, enforce regulations on food quality and promote affordability of healthy diets;
- **Community-based initiatives:** Expand community gardens, school feeding programmes and local food cooperatives;
- **Support for small-scale farmers:** Encourage local and Indigenous food production systems to ensure resilience; and
- **Youth empowerment:** Provide platforms for youth leadership and policy advocacy on nutrition and agrifood systems.

## Call to action

This session affirmed that **youth are essential actors in reorienting agrifood systems towards health and sustainability**. Participants stressed the urgency of embedding nutrition at the center of agrifood systems transformation and ensuring that healthy diets are accessible, affordable and culturally relevant for all.

