



Lessons learned: “How can dietary guidelines fulfil their potential for agrifood systems transformation”

*This brief summarises the lessons learned from Dialogue 5: **How can dietary guidelines fulfil their potential for agrifood systems transformation** held on September 28 2022. The Dialogue featured experiences from Costa Rica and Ethiopia of developing Food Based Dietary Guidelines and the launch of the new methodology for developing Food System-Based Dietary Guidelines from the FAO. Emerging from the Dialogue were the following lessons:*

The next generation of Food Based Dietary Guidelines have strong potential to link food system issues for consumers and policymakers... Food-based dietary guidelines have historically been developed with the aim of improving health, specifically by providing information to consumers about what to eat for good nutrition. The case of Costa Rica showed that guidelines can also be used to help consumers consider environmental sustainability and the local food economy when making decisions about what to eat. The new methodology of developing Food Systems Based Dietary Guidelines created by FAO is designed to go even further by providing guidance to policymakers and stakeholders across the food systems on the policies and interventions throughout food systems that would enable consumers to eat the recommended diets. The methodology was developed in large part owing the mismatch between providing dietary recommendations without providing guidance on changes on needed in the food supply and food environments to enable those diets. As such the new methodology enables a comprehensive understanding of what it will take to shift food systems to healthier more sustainable diets. Another way Guidelines can integrate different food system issues is by integrating them into the main strategies across government, as is the intention of Ethiopia.

... if they take a multistakeholder approach to development and implementation... The experiences of Costa Rica and Ethiopia shows that a multi-stakeholder approach from the start enables actors from all across the food system, government and civil society to identify the shared objectives they would like to achieve and what needs to be done to achieve it. This also creates the space for open debate and to work through disagreement.

..but a real barrier is the lack of capacity for implementation. Experiences shows that many countries have launched Food Based Dietary Guidelines but they have then not been implemented as a result of lack of implementation capacity. Ethiopia for example noted that they lacked this capacity and that it was now critically important for them to build the capacity of implementing entities to take their newly launched Guidelines forward for impact. Yet it is in the implementation that the work really starts; there is a need to push hard in order to build capacity, including financial support and the skills and negotiation skills to get buy-in from stakeholders who need to work together. Having high-level political commitment can facilitate the ability to build capacity.