

PRESS RELEASE**COVID-19 NUTRITION CRISIS — URGENT ACTIONS NEEDED FROM G20**

Over the last year, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted food systems, revealed the weakness of health systems in many low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), and created a nutrition crisis around the world. Nutrition is the first line of defense against infectious diseases and chronic illness; it supports the functioning of a healthy immune system. However, estimates pre-COVID-19 showed that more than 690 million people suffer from malnutrition and 3 billion individuals still cannot afford a healthy diet. This global crisis could add more than 100 million people to the total number of undernourished in the world and, by 2022, cause an additional 168,000 child deaths from undernutrition in LMICs. Hence, achieving the SDG 2 targets and building back better and more equitably after this pandemic requires urgent and scaled-up global efforts toward safe and adequate nutrition for all. New and increased financial resources for nutrition are essential and cannot wait.

The G20 countries must play a crucial role in promoting more sustainable agri-food systems and ensuring health systems are supported as the primary mechanism for delivering programs to fight malnutrition, ensuring no one is left behind. At the global level, the double burden of malnutrition is unequally distributed. Many G20 countries suffer high rates of overweight and obesity (e.g., 72% of Americans and 63% of Australians) while many non-G20 countries are affected by hunger and increasing undernutrition. Moreover, G20 countries, which account for 60% of the world's population, consume at an unsustainable rate, using 75% of carbon emissions that the Paris Agreement allocates to food production.

All these topics were discussed during a high-level, closed-door webinar organized by IAI in cooperation with the ACTION Global Health Advocacy Partnership on May, 20 2021. The event was attended by a broad range of representatives of international institutions, such as Dr. Maximo Torero (Food and Agriculture Organization), Dr. Francesco Branca (World Health Organization), Ms. Anna Horner (World Food Programme), Mr. Leonard Mizzi (European Commission), Dr. Geeta Sethi (World Bank), Dr. Joanne Carter (RESULTS Educational Fund), and Dr. Federico Bonaglia (OECD). In addition, the event involved representatives from the Italian Government (Counsellor Cristiana Mele from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and representatives from the G20 Sherpa Office); heads of the two host organizations (Dr. Vineeta Gupta from ACTION and Dr. Nathalie Tocci from IAI); members of the research community; and Civil society organizations such as Ms. Francesca Belli (Focus Equality), Ms. Kirsten Mathieson (Save the Children International), Dr. Brent Loken (WWF), and Mr. Riccardo Moro (C20).

The workshop facilitated an examination of how the Italian G20 Presidency can provide collective and coordinated leadership to tackle present and future food crises, promote nutrition-sensitive approaches, and allocate adequate financial resources to support a One Health approach to food security and nutrition. At the G20 level, a key moment in this process will be the Foreign Affairs and Development Joint Ministerial Meeting that will result in the Matera Declaration. The Declaration will be essential to boost multilateral and collective actions through the FAO-led Food Coalition and to push forward a global call to action to address emerging food crises and achieve the Zero Hunger goal by 2030. In this context, the Italian G20 Presidency should ensure that these efforts are fully aligned with other key decisions and pledges that will be made in the next months in the context of the UN Food Systems Summit; the G7; the COP 15 on Biodiversity; the COP26; and most of all, the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit in December.

IAI and ACTION will use the findings of the workshop to draft a briefing paper that will be published in July and presented during a Think20-related public webinar.