



Improved metrics and data are needed for effective food system policies in the post-2015 era

TECHNICAL BRIEF No. 2 | October 2015

Summary messages for decision makers

The need for action

- Low and middle income countries are burdened by persistent undernutrition and rapidly growing overweight, obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases.
- Agriculture and food system policies must make a greater contribution to improving nutrition.
- Existing tools used to measure nutrition links to agriculture and other food policy interventions capture only parts of the food system.
- Evidence-based policy making requires more rigorous and specific metrics relating to these elements of the food system and their dynamic interactions over time.

Data gaps on diets and food systems identified

New metrics are needed to measure diet quality and sufficiency, as well as food system efficiency and sustainability.

Progress is needed in six key areas:

1. Improving the quality and quantity of data on food intake among different sectors of the population.
2. Reaching agreement on how to measure diet quality.
3. Developing metrics that measure women's roles in dietary choices.
4. Designing metrics to measure the 'food environment', including how different food system domains are linked to, and interact with, the food environment in which dietary choices are made.
5. Devising metrics that measure the healthiness of food systems, all the way from agriculture through markets to people's actual food consumption.
6. Developing metrics that measure people's ability to access food of sufficient quantity and quality.

The importance of filling data gaps

- Evidence-based policymaking requires sound evidence. It is difficult for governments to make improvements in areas that are not well understood and hence not well measured
- There are several new initiatives aimed at promoting agreement on data needs and proposing new metrics. Validation of novel ways to assess food systems is still in its infancy, so developing country researchers can play an important role in this process.

Policy recommendations

Decision makers should support the establishment of rigorous data collection systems which can adopt innovative tools to assess the impact of various policy interventions across the food system.

The Global Panel recommends four policy actions:

Governments should assume responsibility for:

1. Measuring impacts of national policies across all domains of a food system.
2. Enhancing national statistical capacity to generate the disaggregated data needed to support domestic and global development goals and the timely assessment of policy impacts.

Developing country scientists and the global research community should:

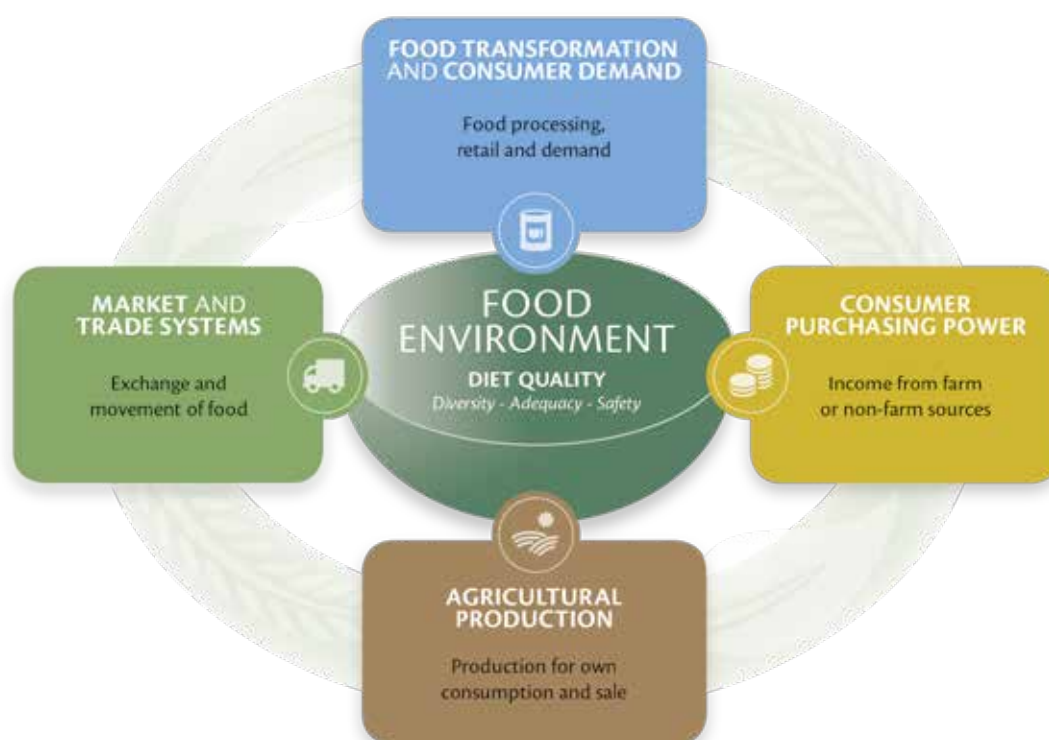
3. Address knowledge gaps and data deficiencies that have been identified in the six priority knowledge gaps listed above.
4. Define appropriate metrics of food system efficiency and healthy diets.

How can Agriculture and Food System Policies improve Nutrition?

There is a real opportunity for the research community and governments to work together to develop robust mechanisms to collect better system-wide data on food that support the design and evaluation of the nutritional impacts of food policy interventions.

The multiple burdens on health created today for low and middle income countries by food-related nutrition problems include not only persistent undernutrition and stunting, but also widespread vitamin and mineral deficiencies and growing prevalence of overweight, obesity and non-communicable diseases. These different forms of malnutrition limit people's opportunity to live healthy and productive lives, and impede the growth of economies and whole societies.

The food environment from which consumers should be able to create healthy diets is influenced by four domains of economic activity:



In each of these domains, there is a range of policies that can have enormous influence on nutritional outcomes. In the Global Panel's Technical Brief, we explain how these policies can influence nutrition, both positively and negatively. We make an argument for an integrated approach, drawing on policies from across these domains, and the need for more empirical evidence to identify successful approaches.

Find out more here: www.glopan.org/technical-brief

Download Technical Brief No. 2 here: www.glopan.org/metrics-data

Jointly funded by



BILL & MELINDA
GATES foundation

T +44 20 3073 8325

E secretariat@glopan.org

W glopan.org

@Glo_PAN

This report is based on research funded in part by the UK Government and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The findings and conclusions contained within are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect positions or policies of the funders.