Towards an Action Plan for a Food-Systems Approach to Improve the Diets of Young People

How do we identify effective food systems solutions?

Professor Corinna Hawkes
Director, Centre for Food Policy, City, University of London
What do we want *food systems* to do for children’s diets?

**FOOD ENVIRONMENTS**

Make recommended diets available, affordable, acceptable, appealing

*More of some foods, less of others*

- For immediate nutritional needs
- For longer term needs
- Healthy “choices” by caregivers /kids
- Healthy (not unhealthy) taste preferences

**Critical for kids**
- sustaining change & changing systems
The food system – “the complete set of people, institutions, activities, processes, and infrastructure involved in producing and consuming food for a given population” (WWF, 2015)

Source: Global Panel on Agriculture for Food Systems & Nutrition, 2016
A Vision

1. All children eat healthy diets

2. All children want & are able to eat healthy diets

3. The food provisioning landscape makes healthy diets available, affordable, acceptable, appealing

4. Food supply chains deliver healthy diets in ways that are economically viable & support decent livelihoods

5. Agricultural production delivers food needed for healthy diets, sustainably

A food system reshaped to deliver healthy diets to all children
A food system centered around people as eaters

Potential entry points for solutions in the food system

1. People (eaters)
   - Income
   - Education
   - Skills

2. People’s homes
   - Kitchens
   - Sanitation
   - TV

3. Where people acquire food
   - Sanitation for street vendors
   - Zoning for farm markets
   - Food at work
   - Licenses for “low cost” supermarkets

4. What food is available, affordable, appealing at point of acquisition
   - School food standards
   - Taxes/subsidies
   - Point of sale promotion
   - Capacity building to reduce food losses
   - Roads
   - Food trading partners required to show how trade will boost diet quality

5. Food storage, distribution, trade
   - Reformulation
   - Fortification
   - Sales-reduction targets
   - Competition law
   - Roads

6. Food transformation/processing
   - Re-allocate agricultural research funding through a diet quality lens
   - Diversification
   - Urban agriculture
   - Fishpond development

7. Agricultural production (horticulture, arable, fish, livestock)

8. Inputs into agricultural production (seed research, feed, irrigation)
Who do we want to do it?

- Food systems are made up of – and connected by – people, **many of whom are in the private sector**
- The failure of food systems to deliver is a collective failure of decisions made by people
- Acting in food systems to improve diets is thus a matter of people throughout the system making different decisions
- Policies, programmes, interventions should be designed to alter incentives for these decisions
- Potentially very complex – many people, many contexts
But once upon a time (and often, still today) it was seen as very simple….

“From the start, it was assumed that the overall increase in the aggregate food supply and higher income through agriculture (the dominant occupation of the poor) were the main routes to better nutrition.”

Source: World Bank. LEARNING FROM WORLD BANK HISTORY. Agriculture and Food-Based Approaches for Addressing Malnutrition. 2014
Recognising the complexity, how do we select these actions?

A *child-centred* analysis can cut through the complexity to identify the most powerful levers for systems change *in that context*. 
“… consideration of past successes and failures has led to the following important conclusion: instead of adopting and trying to implement a pre-packaged technical interventions, the most appropriate actions should emerge from the assessment and analysis of the particular context” (UNICEF, 1990)
**Working backwards into the food system to identify solutions to malnutrition in all its forms**

1. What is the nutritional problem(s) to solve among the children we care about?

2. What is the contribution of poor diets among children to the problem?

3. What are childrens & caregivers lived experiences of the problem?

4. How do these experiences interact with social & food environments to affect children/caregiver choice behaviour & preferences?

5. How are people’s environments shaped by the behavior of the food supply systems underpinning them?
## An analytical tool to identify food systems solutions for poor child diets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key questions</th>
<th>Assessment and analysis</th>
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<td>3. What are childrens and caregivers lived experiences of the problem?</td>
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<td>Analysis of (dis)incentives in food systems that affect options &amp; signals, inc economic/political incentives</td>
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There are disincentives for food systems change (and thus conflicts) – but also incentives

Where are the most powerful levers for systems change?

Different sectors have different interests, meaning policies are incoherent

WHO - Health

Objective 3: to reduce modifiable risk factors for NCDs & underlying social determinants through creating health-promoting environments e.g. reduce saturated fatty acids in food and replace them with unsaturated fatty acids; replace trans-fats with unsaturated fats.”

World Bank - Economic development

“The World Bank Group’s objective in engaging in the palm oil sector is to invest in the potential of the sector to reduce poverty by generating growth & incomes, & to contribute to food security while ensuring sustainable management of resources & the environment.”
### Key questions

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<td>6. What actions can solve the problem by addressing people’s experiences</td>
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To develop an action plan....

A. **ASSESSMENT**
   - **Get data:** Identify role of diet problem by collating and collecting data which is fit for purpose (“eat more” AND “eat less” for all forms of malnutrition for all ages)
   - **Listen:** to lived experience of why infants, kids, teens eat what they do eat what they eat) & engage with communities through user-centred co-design processes

B. **ANALYSIS**
   - **Be clear on drivers of behaviour:** among children and caregivers AND among the people of the food system & how they differ ([dis]incentives)

C. **ACTION (global focus)**
   - **Select big common levers to encourage systems change, which can be tailored to context through assessment & analysis:** e.g. *incentivise business models* (informal markets, entrepreneurs) to enable alignment between nutrition and ability to deliver; *regulate & standards*: to set a a level playing field to allow a “race to the top” for industry
Thank you!