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## CONCEPT NOTE

# Commemoration of the 8th Africa Day for Food and Nutrition Security with Continental Symposium on Food Systems

***THEME: Advancing Sustainable Food Systems for Healthy Diets and  
Improved Nutrition – Key for Harnessing Africa's Demographic Dividend***

30 October – 01 November, 2017

Kigali, Rwanda (tbc)

## 1. Background

The Malabo Declaration, the African Union Agenda 2063; “the Africa we want”, the Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy (ARNS) and the Africa Renewed Initiative on Stunting Elimination (ARISE) have been geared towards meeting the continental commitment as well as global nutrition commitments on nutrition as stipulated in the ICN-2, SDGs and N4G and the World Health Assembly Nutrition Targets. Africa is making progress in reducing undernutrition with significant effort required to meet targets for all forms of malnutrition. Significant momentum has been galvanized on multi-sectoral engagement for nutrition in Africa and most countries have adhered to the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement. More and more countries in Africa are now making effort to advance nutrition sensitive food systems with commitment to meeting not just the global nutrition targets, but also the more ambitious Malabo targets for stunting and underweight while promoting a Hunger Free Agenda by 2025 in Africa. Nutrition is being mainstreamed into strategic programmes and policy frameworks. It is central to regional and national agriculture and food systems initiatives in Africa. African government are doing their best to make the required investments into current food systems to deliver access to adequate nutritionally balanced and healthy diets for all. While progress is being made in reducing the prevalence of undernourishment there are still many African women and children that suffer from micronutrient deficiencies, such as vitamin A, iron, zinc and iodine deficiencies. The question now is how best to maximize the positive contribution of food systems to nutrition and minimize the negative impacts from poorly planned food systems.

The Africa Day for Food and Nutrition Security (ADFNS) was declared in July 2010 by the African Union Heads of State and Government at the 15<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the AU Summit in Kampala, Uganda. This decision was made in recognition of the unacceptable and chronic crisis of hunger and malnutrition in Africa. The ADFNS has so far been successfully commemorated in seven times following its launch in Lilongwe, Malawi, on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2010. The second and third edition was commemorated in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the fourth in Niamey, Niger, the fifth in Kinshasa, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the sixth in Kampala, Uganda, and the seventh in Accra, Ghana. This year’s commemoration of the ADFNS is planned to take place in **Kigali, Rwanda**, with the Continental Symposium on Food Systems scheduled to take place from the 30<sup>th</sup> of October to the 1<sup>st</sup> of November, 2017.

It is to be noted that the AU Decision tagged **Assembly/AU/Dec.327(XV)** for commemorating the ADFNS “*REQUESTS the [AU] Commission to coordinate efforts of Member States to commemorate the Africa Day for Food and Nutrition Security*” and “*ALSO REQUESTS the Commission together with the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA), in collaboration with partners, to take necessary steps to develop and coordinate the implementation of a strategy to take forward the vision of a food secure Africa*”.

To respond to the above, the African Union Commission, the NEPAD Agency and key partners; FAO, WHO, UNICEF, WFP, UNECA and key regional stakeholders, such as

the Africa Development Bank, and the Steering Committee Members of the Africa Day on Food and Nutrition Security (ADFNS), are co-organizing the 2017 ADFNS coupled and preceded by the Continental Symposium on 'Sustainable Food Systems for Healthy Diets and Improved Nutrition. The aims of the Continental Symposium will be to review evidence, examine policy implications and provide targeted guidance for further operationalisation of the nutrition commitments at Continental level.

## **2. Introduction and Rationale of the ADFNS**

The main purpose of the ADFNS is to serve as a platform for rallying political and financial commitments at all levels to address contemporary challenges of food and nutrition insecurity in Africa. The event provides the platform at national, regional and continental levels to share experiences, knowledge and mutual learning, as well as measure progress in assuring food and nutrition security for all by governments and multi-stakeholder partners.

After wide consultations, the theme for commemorating this year's ADFNS and the Continental Symposium on Food Systems in Africa is on:

### ***Advancing Sustainable Food Systems for Healthy Diets and Improved Nutrition: Key for Harnessing Africa's Demographic Dividend***

Under this main theme four (4) sub-themes have been proposed to inform messages that must resonate to the public, as well as target audience, and guide technical preparations, development of issue papers, parallel sessions and various public information material as well as side events of the ADFNS and the Continental Symposium.

- Sub-theme 1: Supply side policies and measures for diversifying food production and increasing availability and affordability of nutritious foods for healthy diets***
- Sub-theme 2: Demand side policies and measures for increasing access and empowering consumers to choose healthy diets***
- Sub-theme 3: Measures to reinforce mutual accountability, improve governance, and equity within the food systems***
- Sub-theme 4: Enhancing capacities for implementing the Africa Renewed Initiative on Stunting Elimination (ARISE) and the Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy (ARNS)***

**Sub-theme 1** is intended to promote “*supply side policies and measures for diversifying food production and increasing availability and affordability of nutritious foods for healthy diets*”. It would seek to promote sustainable agriculture production and dietary diversification while maintaining nutritional value and food safety along food value chains in Africa. Strategic markets needs to be leveraged for promoting effective marketing of healthy foods and discouraging unhealthy food consumption. African governments will need to invest in the sustainable production of fruits and vegetables, climate smart livestock, fisheries through sustainable aquaculture and the sustainable use of underutilized nutritious food resources including non-wood forest resources while nurturing sustainable biodiverse agro-ecological systems. More effort should be invested in nutrient dense and bio-fortified food crops as well as re-formulation of food to reduce high sugar, salt and ultra-processed foods in African food systems. Private sector food industries should also invest in food fortification with micronutrients and food safety. Food markets should be re-organized and properly mapped for promoting healthy diets, reducing post-harvest losses and food waste while enforcing compliance to standards on food safety and nutrition labelling.

**Sub-theme 2** is meant to throw light on the demand side “*policies and measures for increasing access and empowering consumers to choose healthy diets*”. Dietary patterns are not only a reflection of what people eat; they reflect complex social behaviours. Many factors need to be considered when undertaking initiatives (e.g. nutrition education) to encourage behavioural changes that can lead to healthier diets. This sub-theme would focus on regulations, awareness and advocacy for better informed food choices by consumers. Information and nutrition education for healthy behaviours will be highlighted under this sub-theme. Incentives must be provided through social protection and livelihood or income generating schemes for increasing access to healthy diets by the most vulnerable. Food based dietary guidelines for reshaping food systems, improved labelling to reduce fat, sugar and salt consumption, market restriction for marketing of unhealthy foods as well as tax disincentives and incentives could be used to reshape consumer demand and access to healthier foods over unhealthy food. The role of Parliamentarians in supporting regulation and advocacy frameworks should be capitalized. School curriculum review to embed nutrition education and re-designing school food and nutrition programmes to increase knowledge on good nutrition practices and healthy food choices. Nutrition education should be integrated into nutrition sensitive school meals and into agriculture extension as well as food catering training programmes. The mass media and social media platforms should be partnered to create awareness and advocacy campaigns on healthy diets.

**Sub-theme 3:** On “*Measures to reinforce mutual accountability, improve governance, and equity within the food systems*” is aimed at ushering in new dialogue on the role of multi-sectoral engagement and mutual accountability for meeting nutrition targets through joint efforts and scaling up of key nutrition interventions. This sub-theme will explore designing, implementing and monitoring evidence based policies effectively with multiple actors and enhancing food systems governance for impact on nutrition

outcomes. Empowering stakeholders and beneficiaries in particular women as drivers of food system change in Africa is critical for achieving results. For tracking mutual accountability, there is the need to map food and nutrition security policies and reinforce data systems for evidence based decision making on improving the quality and nutritional value of African diets. Women empowerment as beneficiaries should ensure access to health diets for infants and young children and adequate healthy diets for all women of reproductive age. Indigenous women's role in biodiversity protection and transmission of food traditions will be highlighted.

**Sub-theme 4** This sub-theme underscores that stunting has direct implications for economies and development in general. Stunted growth in children today will lead to stunted economies tomorrow and stunting elimination therefore lies on all economic and social sectors. Each sector has a specific and key role and need that must contribute to fully harnessing Africa's demographic dividend by investing in the optimal nutrition of all African, in particular children, women and youth. The sub-theme is aimed to underline the importance of strengthening capacities through commitment and dedication of resources for eliminating stunting and comprehensive and coordinated multi-sectoral effort for implementing the Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy. The sub-theme spells out the word "commit", which inculcates the need to effectively dedicate resources, support and enable the environment for actors to carry out activities smoothly and without hindrance. The sub-theme is also intended to reinforce the fact that without enhanced capacities plans cannot be translated into action, to results and to impact. An expert session will be dedicated to discuss, explore, identify and recommend workable strategies for creating and enhancing capacities that translate to improve effectiveness of interventions for eliminating under-nutrition, in particular stunting on the continent and in each AU Member State.

### **3. Purpose and Objectives**

Building on the rationale of the event as described above, the main objective for commemorating the 2017 ADFNS, which is coupled with the Continental Symposium, will be to motivate commitments by decision and policy makers and all relevant actors. They would deliberately recognize the long-term impact of sustainable food systems for healthy diets and improved nutrition on the socio-economic development of Africa and African economies. Stakeholders must also re-commit to dedicate resources to control the risk such that their various developmental efforts do not go in vain in the long-run. Specifically the event is aimed at:

- i. Take stock of the Continental dimension/specificity of food security and nutrition challenges;
- ii. Share key features of food systems in countries on the Continent, and how these influence dietary patterns;
- iii. Identify major regional policy processes/institutions for tackling nutrition issues through a food systems approach; and

- iv. Identify experiences and practical entry points for concerted policy and programmatic action with a view to transform Africa food systems for improving nutrition outcomes.
- v. Facilitate the development of policy actions in line with the ICN2 Framework for Action and the Decade of Action work plan. The 2017 ADFNS and Symposium will also explore ways in which way ongoing actions, strategic programmes and regional initiatives can be utilized as starting points for the change processes.
- vi. Facilitating dialogue among stakeholders, sharing of experiences, best practices, innovations and mutual learning among various stakeholders on options for investing in direct and indirect nutrition interventions
- vii. Documenting lessons learnt from the various messages pronounced by high level statements and areas recommended for the way forward.

#### 4. Technical, Communication and Advocacy Inputs

The commemoration of the 2017 ADFNS and Food Systems Symposium will draw its significance through the following categories of inputs:

- i. **High Level/Champion Advocacy Messages:** Messaging the event will be divided into two segments as follows:
  - a. Statements to be delivered by Influential and Prominent Leaders
  - b. High Level Panel Discussion on the sub-themes
- ii. **Presentation of Background Paper and related Issue Papers** that highlight the theme and sub-themes above.
- iii. **Key outcomes of discussions:** A summary of recommendations from the technical discussions will be presented in the ceremonial events.
- iv. **Communication and advocacy:** banners, musical messages, information leaflets, media advisory, communiqué and press release.
- v. **Exhibition:** to feature relevant showcase of project activities, knowledge products, experience sharing and materials on best practices.

#### 5. Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes from the event will be:

- i. Increased awareness and appreciation of the implications Africa's food systems for improving nutrition outcomes including the reduction and elimination of all forms of malnutrition and effects on the socio economic development of Africa.
- ii. Substantive and persistent political commitment to invest activities aimed at promoting sustainable nutrition sensitive food systems for healthy diets and improved nutrition
- iii. Documented lessons to inform policy, decisions and programmes aimed at improving food systems in African economies
- iv. Mutual accountability to meeting continental and global commitments on nutrition through sustainable nutrition sensitive food systems.

## **6. Organization**

A Joint Steering Committee at the continental level led by the AU Commission will be set up comprised of the NEPAD Agency, UN agencies (FAO, WFP, ECA, UNICEF, WHO, UN Women), bilateral development partners such as USAID, DFID and International Non-Governmental Organisations (Save the Children, WVI, FANRPAN, One Campaign, IFPRI, etc.). It is recommended that the Host Country Rwanda should have their National Organizing Committees (NOC) comprised of the same partners and civil society organisations. The NOC will be sub-divided into sub-committees to facilitate its work (technical; finance; communications; logistics; and reception, hospitality and protocol). Each sub-committee will be given specific terms of reference to guide its operation.

## **7. Structure of the Commemoration and the Symposium:**

The following will be the structure of the continental commemoration of the ADFNS and the Continental Symposium on Food Systems:

- a) The two day Continental Symposium will precede the actual commemoration of the 8<sup>th</sup> ADFNS. The Continental Symposium will involve key partners and stakeholders involved in food and nutrition security in Africa. It will be largely funded by FAO, WHO, AfDB and other key partners. The Symposium will be used to reflect on evolving trends in the African food system that has significant implications for nutrition which should inform future direction. Summary and key recommendations from the Symposium will be presented in the ceremonial or high-level commemoration of the actual ADFNS on the first of November 2017.
- b) The main ADFNS Commemoration event will be held in the morning or afternoon of 1<sup>st</sup> of November 2017 after the two-day Continental Symposium. This main event is expected to feature official opening remarks, keynote address, panel discussions guided by the sub-themes and other activities as agreed by the Steering Committee of the event. It will also feature highlights of the summary of the pre-event – the Continental Symposium.

Member states may adopt any format or structure for commemorating the event as they deem fit.

## **8. Participants**

This is a public event, so members of the public are invited. However the Continental Symposium may be by invitation and involvement of all key partners only. In the latter case, the event can be attended by delegates of invited stakeholder organisations and institutions, including the public and private sectors, the academia, educational and research institutions, UN Agencies, bilateral and multilateral development partners

and stakeholders involved in nutrition in Africa. While Member States may have as many participants at their disposal, the Continental Symposium and commemoration of the actual ADFNS may involve from 100 to 400 participants.