

15.2 Maternal, infant and young child nutrition and 15.3 Accelerating efforts on food safety

MMI, supported by PHM, welcomes this opportunity to address agenda items 15.2 and 15.3.

We appreciate WHO's Comprehensive Implementation Plan in pointing to the member states, the lacunae in the implementation of nutrition programs and raising the importance of increasing the coverage of these interventions. We are also glad that the report tabled by the Director General in the EB has raised the effects of climate change on food security.

However, we are concerned that progress on the global targets has been painfully slow. With the COVID 19 pandemic expected to worsen nutritional outcomes, especially in the LMICs, we urge MS to show more commitment on addressing the impact of malnutrition. The importance of the political economy of food systems have been completely overlooked in discussions around maternal and child nutrition. This could have deleterious effects in implementing nutrition interventions. As of now, we see that high level declarative initiatives do not seem to be driving improvements in the global nutrition situation. We would also like to point to apparent conflicts of interest in some of these initiatives due to the active involvement of the food industry. The emphasis on expanding trade on food overlooks the proliferation of ultra processed foods from HICs to LMICs.

While addressing the need for enhanced food safety, we must not compromise food sovereignty and the interests and rights of communities. The harmonization of food safety standards should take into consideration the interests of small producers and small businesses especially in LMIC. The inequity inherent in the operation of such standards favouring HICs and transnational food corporations should be addressed in earnest. Food standards should place public health standards over and above market objectives.

WHO's total budget is woefully inadequate. We urge MS and donors to increase contributions to WHO's core budget to support participation in codex decision making.