



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

# FAO Food systems-based dietary guidelines (FSBDGs) methodology: Need, principles and approach

CCEURO 33, Berlin.

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22/05/2024





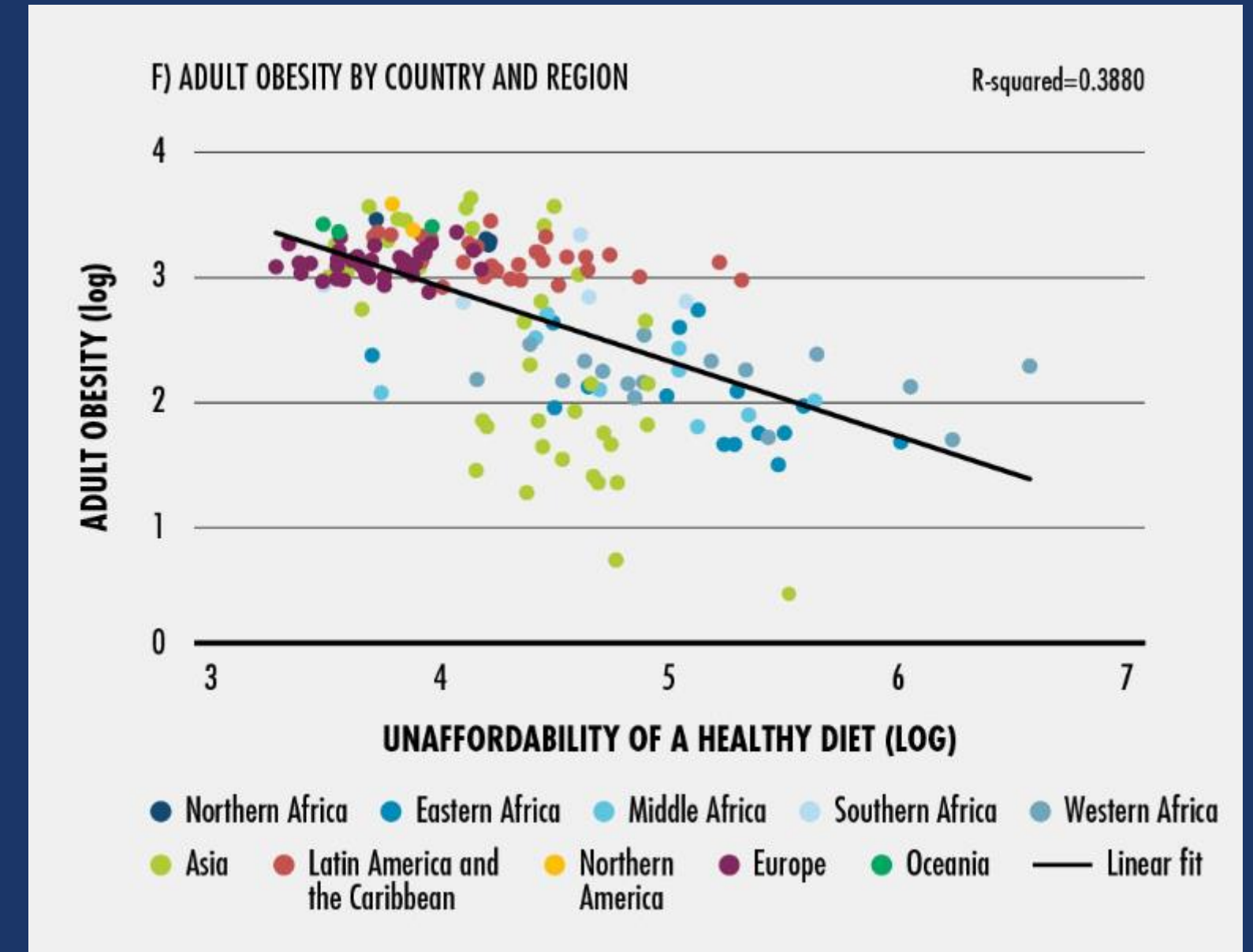
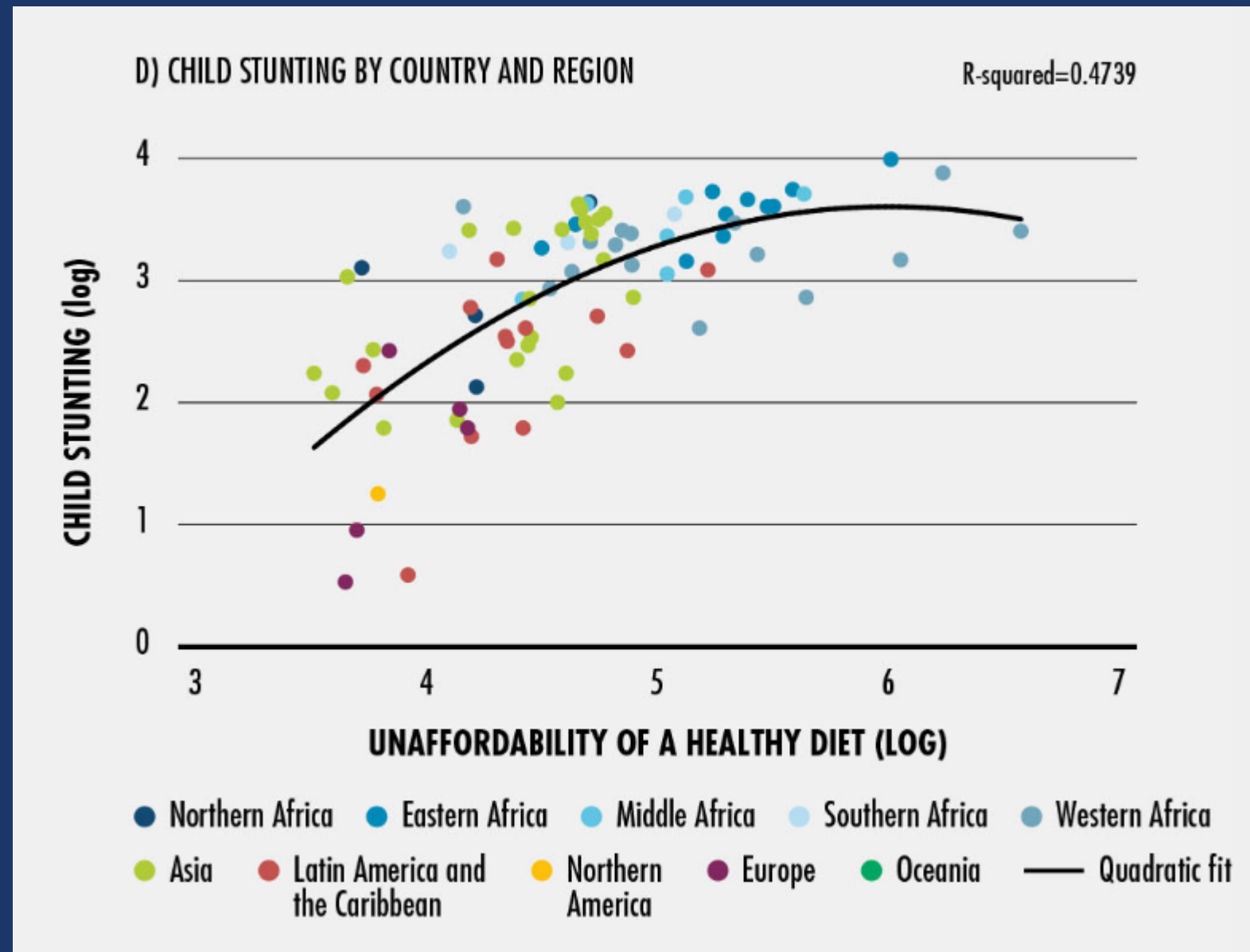
# Malnutrition

## The Problem & Opportunity

- As many as **783 million** people are undernourished
- Over **2 billion** people are affected by micronutrient deficiencies
- Malnutrition is an underlying cause in **nearly half** of all deaths of children under 5 years of age
- **676 million** people are obese
- Diet related NCDs are responsible for **74%** of all deaths worldwide



# Food systems' challenges



Source: SOFI 2020



# Nutrition, diets and food systems

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Good nutrition **starts** with what we eat, making healthy diets a cornerstone solution for addressing all forms of malnutrition. In addition, as the HLPE (2016) notes, "(diets) interact with food systems, not only as an outcome of existing food systems but also as a driver of change for future food systems."





# Dietary Guidelines

*Over 100 countries have described, what healthy diets are in their context through the development of dietary guidelines.*

Africa: 11

Asia and the Pacific: 18

Europe: 34

Latin America and the Caribbean: 29

Near East: 6

North America: 2

**Food-based dietary guidelines**

Background Regions Resources Capacity development

**Food-based dietary guidelines** (also known as dietary guidelines) are intended to establish a basis for public food and nutrition, health and agricultural policies and nutrition education programmes to foster healthy eating habits and lifestyles. They provide advice on foods, food groups and dietary patterns to provide the required nutrients to the general public to promote overall health and prevent chronic diseases.

FAO assists Member Countries to develop, revise and implement food-based dietary guidelines and food guides in line with current scientific evidence. FAO also carries out periodic reviews on progress made in the development and use of dietary guidelines, tracking changes in their overall focus and orientation.

More than 100 countries worldwide have developed food-based dietary guidelines that are adapted to their nutrition situation, food availability, culinary cultures and eating habits. In addition countries publish food guides, often in the form of food pyramids and food plates, which are used for consumer education [Read more](#)

Please note that individual country pages are only available in English and that FAO does not necessarily endorse the development processes of countries by including their information in this platform.

**Africa**

- Benin
- Kenya
- Namibia
- Nigeria
- Seychelles
- Sierra Leone
- South Africa

**Asia and the Pacific**

- Afghanistan
- Australia
- Bangladesh
- Cambodia
- China
- Fiji
- India
- Indonesia

**Europe**

- Albania
- Austria
- Belgium
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Cyprus
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Georgia
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Iceland
- Ireland

**Latin America and the Caribbean**

- Antigua and Barbuda
- Argentina
- Bahamas
- Barbados
- Belize
- Bolivia (Plurinational State of)
- Brazil
- Chile
- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- Cuba
- Dominica
- Dominican Republic
- Ecuador
- El Salvador
- Grenada
- Guatemala

**FAO webinar series**

**Pyramids, wheels, plates and pots... Developing FBDG graphics**

March 24th 15.30 GMT+1

[See recording here](#)

**Latest publications**

**Plates, pyramids, planet**

Developments in national healthy and sustainable dietary guidelines: a state of play assessment



# What are dietary guidelines?

**Evidence-based** recommendations that **outline** what a healthy diet represents in a country.

Country-specific, developed **based on** best available evidence, and an analysis of the context (health and nutrition situation)\* >

They are **popularly recognized** by simple messages and a graphic (food guide).

Generally used to inform consumers disseminated through communication products or in food and nutrition education

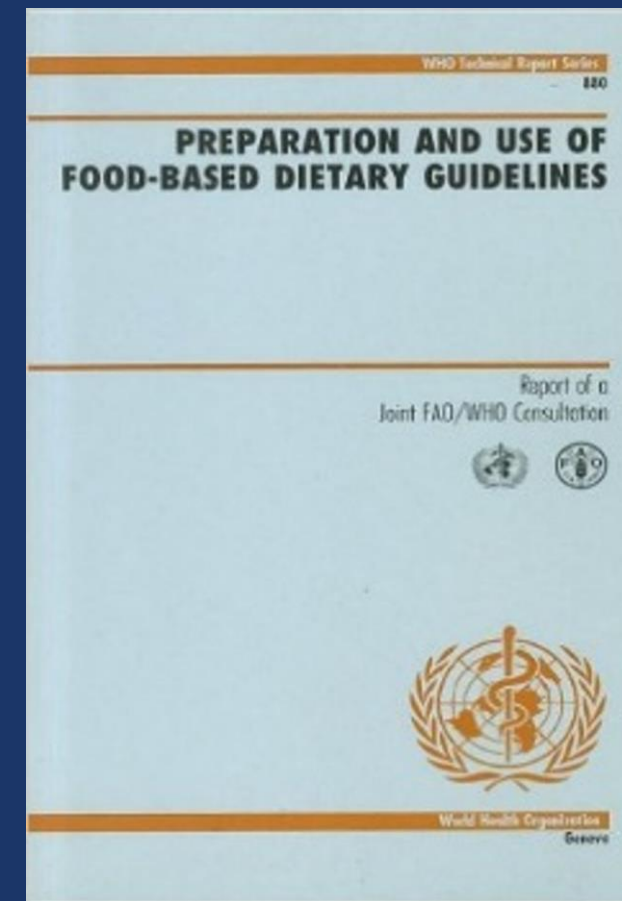
Potential to “*inform and guide policymaker actions not simply to inform or encourage individuals*” – GLOPAN 2020





# The need for new guidance

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1998



2007

- Support to countries
- Criticism of current dietary guidelines
- Interest on sustainability of diets
- Survey
- Gaps/Innovations





# Changes and Innovations

What's new in the upcoming FAO Food systems-based dietary guidelines methodology?





# STRENGTHENED and INNOVATIVE ELEMENTS of the new FSBDG guidance

## ANCHORED IN A FOOD SYSTEMS APPROACH

National ownership and leadership

Informed by scientific evidence

Multi-stakeholder / multi-disciplinary

Focused in systemic analysis and changes

Theory of Change

Behavioural focus

Free of vested interests

Implementation with capacity development

M E L

## INTEGRATING SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

FSBDGs

**FOOD**

SYSTEMS-BASED

DIETARY GUIDELINES



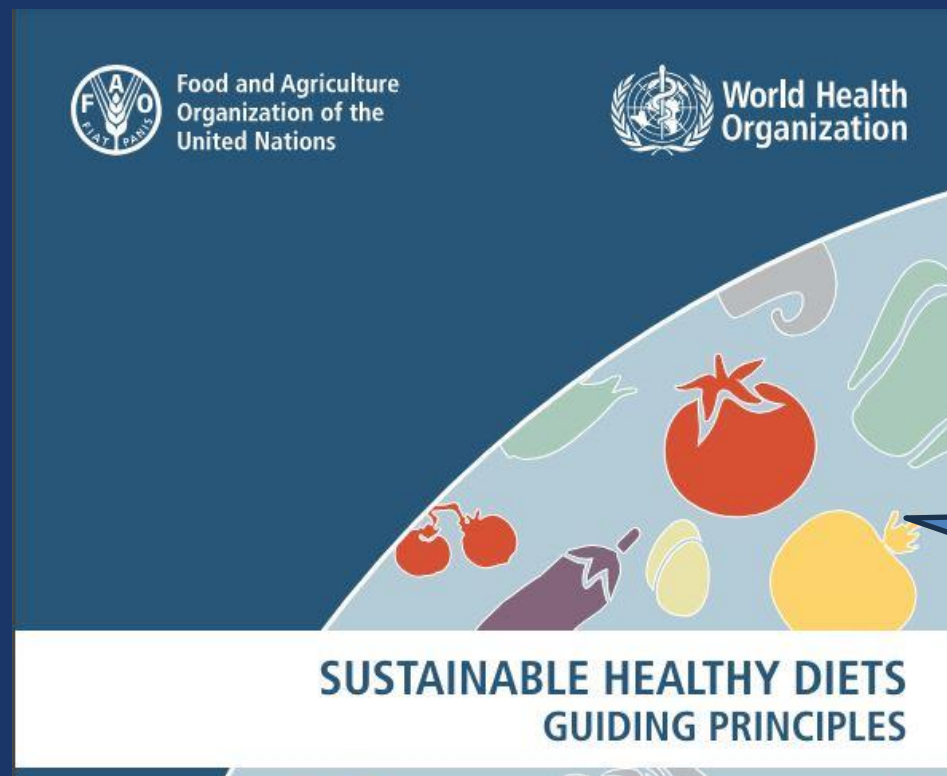
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# Conceptual frameworks



# Concept of healthy diets from sustainable food systems



Source: National Geographic

Context

01

They are dietary patterns that promote all dimensions of individual **health** and **well-being**.

02

Contribute to prevent all types of malnutrition and support the maintenance of planetary health

03

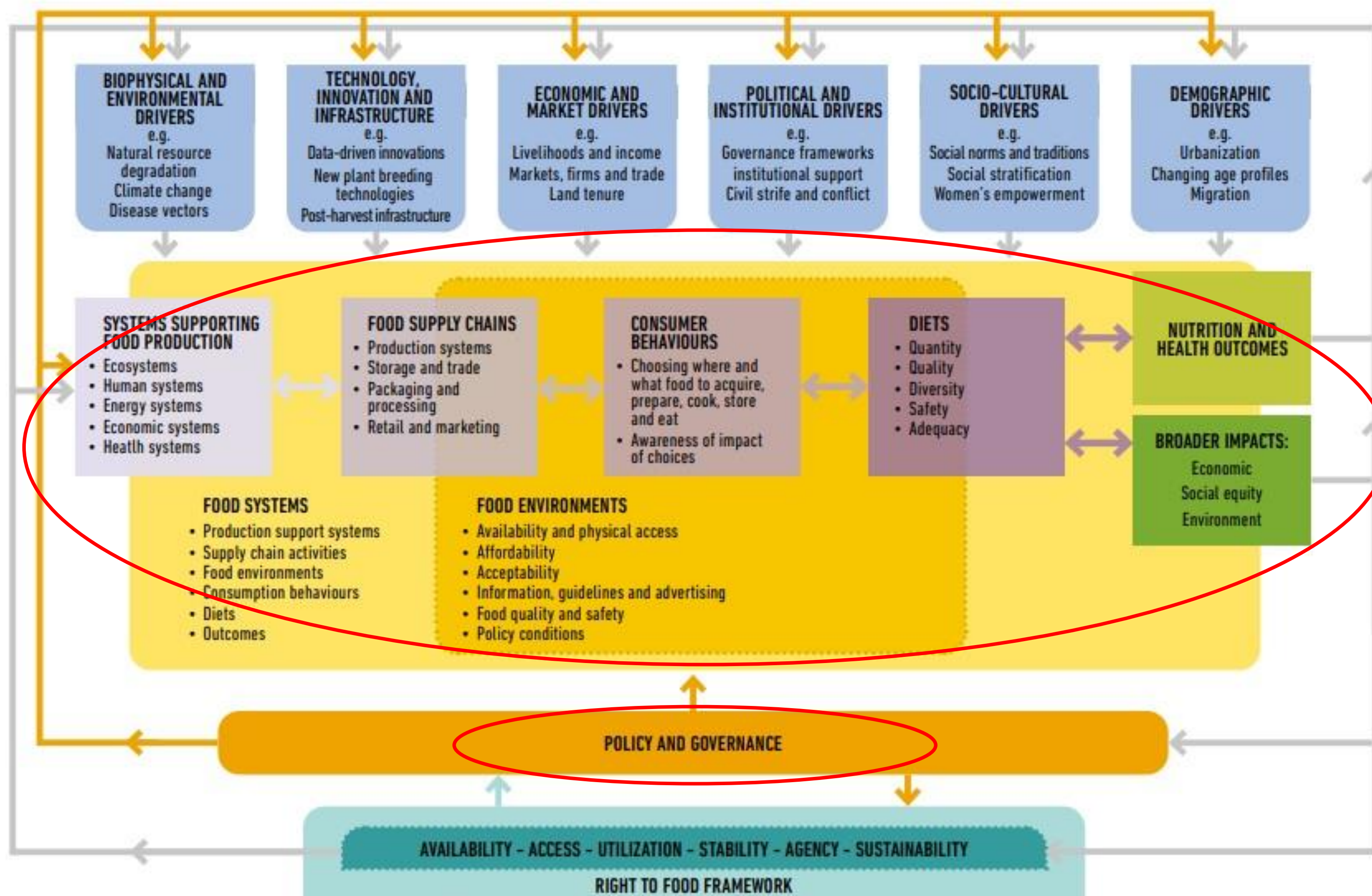
Are **accessible, affordable, safe, equitable** and **culturally acceptable**

04

**Must** combine all the dimensions of sustainability to avoid unintended consequences.



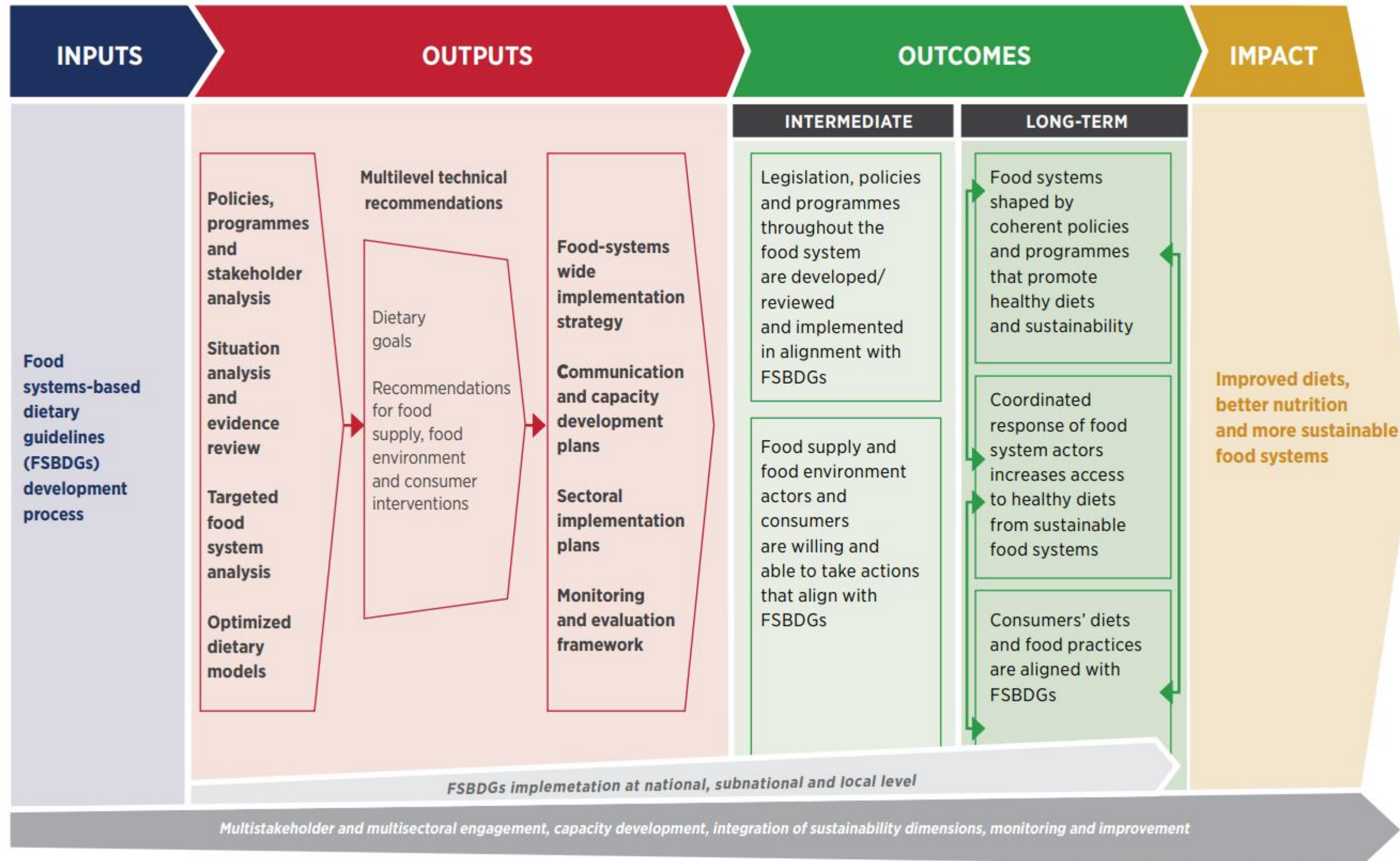




Source: HLPE 2020



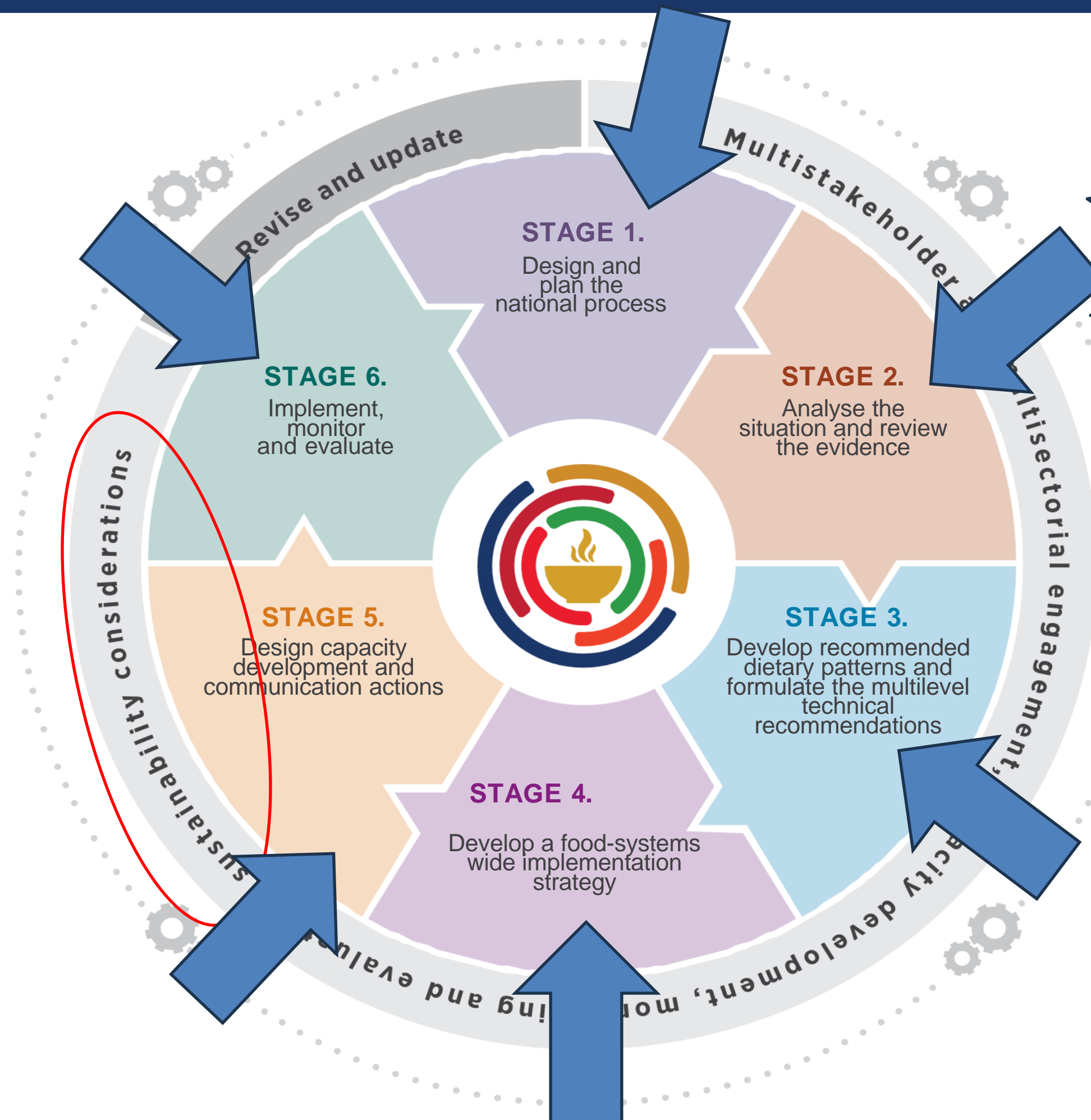
# Theory of change



## ASSUMPTIONS

- > A political will and commitment from relevant entities to support the development or revision of the FSBDGs and to implement them exists.
- > Sufficient and continuous human and financial resources and time are allocated to develop, revise and implement the FSBDGs.
- > An enabling environment for multisectoral and multidisciplinary collaboration and coordination exists to jointly develop, revise and implement the FSBDGs across the food system.
- > Openness and willingness to undertake the process in a transparent way, with clear principles of engagement and with continuous monitoring and evaluation.
- > FSBDGs influence directly and coherently the goals and instruments of national food-related policies, investments and action plans across the food system.

# Stages to Develop & Implement FSBDG



Sustainability

Source: FAO forthcoming



## Summary- Key messages

DGs have a vast potential to promote healthy diets from sustainable food systems by informing policies and programmes throughout the food system

DGs need to be better developed with a solid anchor in evidence and with a wider scope. Also better communicated, implemented, used and evaluated to unpack their potential.

There is growing international demand that DGs integrate sustainability considerations. This is not an option but a need.

Over 100 countries have developed DGs. Evidence is scarce on the impact of these efforts in terms of behavioural change and this is partly due to the way they have been developed, implemented and used.

FAO is currently finalizing a new FSBDGs methodology, with step-by-step guidance to achieve the potential of DG to promote healthy diets for all and to contribute to the transformation of food systems.



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Thank you very much!



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For more information, contact us at: Email: [dietary-guidelines@fao.org](mailto:dietary-guidelines@fao.org)

<https://www.fao.org/nutrition/education/food-based-dietary-guidelines>