

Second International Conference on Nutrition
Rome, Italy
19-21 November 2014

New Zealand country statement

New Zealand welcomes this opportunity to present the New Zealand country statement at the second international conference on Nutrition.

Since the last conference held some 22 years ago there have been significant developments in the area of nutrition and food security. At the same time I am sure that most countries would agree that many of the challenges that were present at the time of the first International Conference in 1992 remain. Clearly the world has seen a substantial growth in agricultural production to meet the demands of growing world population. Globalization, urbanization, changing lifestyles and growth in per capita incomes have also brought about changes in food consumption patterns in many parts of the world. The changes in lifestyles, including dietary patterns, the increasing availability and consumption of foods high in fat, salt and sugar have contributed to the rising incidence of obesity and non communicable diseases. It is noteworthy that the problems of obesity and non-communicable diseases are not restricted to any one group of countries. As with many other parts of the world the growing burden of non-communicable diseases and the need for action on the four key modifiable risk factors of alcohol, nutrition, physical inactivity and tobacco are matters for concern for New Zealand too.

As underscored by the Conference declaration, the challenges of nutrition are multi dimensional and call for concerted action across a number of areas. There are no simple solutions. There are clear roles for government, industry and consumers and achieving better nutritional outcomes calls for collaborative effort from all the players and a greater understanding of the important contribution of each sector.

Coherent global regional and national policy approaches are needed across all relevant sectors to promote responsible trade in food and investment in agriculture, food processing and distribution. New Zealand is pleased to note the clear recognition in the Conference declaration that trade is a key element in achieving food security and improving nutrition. Fair and market oriented world trade systems and sustainable agricultural practices are important for achieving food security and nutrition for all.

The voluntary Framework for Action that is expected to come out of ICN2 addresses a diverse range of areas and reflects the complex relationship between nutrition, food security and broader public health issues. The global challenges in these areas are varied and it is for each country to pursue actions that best meet their national circumstances and needs.

New Zealand also welcomes and supports the call for strengthening national legislation and regulatory framework to achieve improved food safety and food security. We support the development of national food standards based on international norms developed by the Codex Alimentarius Commission. Food standards are important not merely to assure food safety and quality but also to help consumers to make informed and healthy choices. In this context I would like to mention a few initiatives that New Zealand has taken in recent years to address specific nutrition

public health issues. These include provisions for both mandatory and voluntary fortification of commonly consumed foods to address specific micronutrient requirements and introduction of new Health Star Rating labelling guidelines for voluntary application to improve consumer information about the nutritional status of various foods and support healthy choices. New Zealand government also funds a wide range of programmes, services and evaluations at national, regional and local levels to improve health and nutrition, increasing physical activity and reducing obesity. Some examples of national and regional initiatives include the Fruit in Schools programme; the Healthy Families NZ initiative; the National Well Child programme; promotion of breastfeeding; and regional projects to improve maternal and infant health and nutrition.

There has been much progress at the international level in terms of developing standards and guidelines in the area of nutrition and labelling to help consumers make informed choices about foods and ensure the nutritional integrity of food products. Food standards can also play a role in reducing food losses and wastage, with the current work on date marking being pivotal to reducing the unnecessary dumping of food that is still safe for human consumption. New Zealand has been at the forefront of many of these initiatives at the international level and will continue to work with the Codex Alimentarius Commission to promote the development of sound science based international standards to address nutrition and related issues.

In closing New Zealand would like to reiterate our support for the overall aims and objectives of this conference and hope that, through our collective efforts and actions, we can promote tangible improvements in the areas of food security, nutrition and public health and achieve a healthier and food secure world.
