

SA INTERVENTION THEMATIC REVIEW SDG2 HLPF SESSION TWO TUESDAY 11 JULY

Thank you Moderator. Our intervention comes from the heart and is responding to one of the questions for this session - *"What institutional mechanisms or arrangements that combine ministries, programmes, sectors, or stakeholders to integrate SDG 2 with other SDGs appear to be most promising?"* Also, Moderator, as you stated at the beginning of our session - *"What are the successes and where are we falling short?"*

Malnutrition matters because it has devastating long-term consequences for health, livelihoods and national economies as a whole. It is particularly devastating on children. Through improved composite indicators – including those from the SDGs - measuring multi-dimensional poverty, in South Africa we now know that 45% of the deaths of children under 3 are related to malnutrition. The rate of stunting of children under 3 years has gone up from 23% in 2005 to 26% in 2012. At the same time, the rate of overweight and obesity of children under 3 doubled from 5% to 10% between 2005 and 2012. We know that children who are stunted are less likely than their non-stunted counterparts to do well in school, gain employment and if they do find work, will have lower wages. As adults, they are more likely to get diseases like diabetes, hypertension and some forms of heart disease and cancer. Stunted girls when they become mothers are more likely to give birth to malnourished babies. Adults who are diagnosed with obesity and diabetes are estimated to generate economic costs for their families that are the equivalent of 8-16% of their annual income. At the national level it is estimated that, for African countries on average, malnutrition depresses GDP by 11%.

This called for a more integrated approach – to ensure efforts to address malnutrition become a key development priority - not only a health outcome, but a key input into the economic growth process, also in the context of an integrated implementation of SDG2 at national and local levels; and thereby raising the political and economic profile of nutrition. A Diagnostic / Implementation Evaluation of Nutrition Interventions for children from conception to age 5 was undertaken by the National Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation together with the Departments responsible for implementing child nutrition interventions. The purpose of this evaluation was to assess all nutrition interventions to determine enabling and inhibiting factors for implementation, as well as the level of synergy among sector departments. The evaluation focused on the sufficiency of policy, leadership, resource allocation, management and oversight, and local level service delivery. The evaluation found that South Africa had around 60 policies, strategies, plans and programmes for addressing food insecurity and malnutrition, but lacked a single integrated national plan to achieve this goal. This despite the fact that in South Africa, the right to food is entrenched in the Constitution.

This led to the National Food and Nutrition Security Plan for the period 2017 - 2022, as a collective response and coherent strategy to harness all efforts towards a common direction. It builds on current processes to, among other, develop novel postharvest technologies to maintain food quality and safety and reduce postharvest losses and food waste, as well as to assist all food producers, facilitate and mainstream the participation of youth, women and persons with disabilities in agriculture and fisheries sectors. Also to protect, improve and optimally utilize scarce natural resources (e.g. land, water, bio-diversity and genetic resources) – including financing models to promote the development of climate-smart agriculture.

All the interventions in this national strategy are game changers, and, if implemented properly, will maximise the leverage we can obtain from acting in unison, across spheres of government,

with our communities, and with our social and development partners. The interventions will also complement existing social protection allowances to more than 17 million South Africans and existing programmes for Early Childhood Development, among other. Apart from the national government departments and UN agencies (UNICEF, WHO, FAO, WFP) involved in formulating and implementing this strategy, an international NGO called Family Health International – FHI360 Degrees - was crucial in this integrative exercise. The following quote from their website illustrates why they were crucial and also provides some answer to the question posed earlier: *“The key aspects of our lives are inextricably linked. Improving lives in sustainable, measurable ways is possible only when we connect ideas, resources and people who have a stake in the issues affecting their communities. Through customized responses that address multiple aspects of people's lives, we can exponentially increase the impact of our work.”* As the President of the African Development Bank put it recently, *“good nutrition provides the grey matter infrastructure that provides the basis for the innovation and entrepreneurship needed to supercharge Africa’s expected demographic dividend”*.

Thank you.