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Comments on “Reducing Inequalities for Food Security and Nutrition” V0 draft of HLPE-FSN report from the CFS of FAO

Posted to: <https://www.fao.org/fsnforum/consultation/reducing-inequalities-food-security-and-nutrition-hlpe-fsn-consultation-v0-draft>

Dear HLPE-FSN,

The Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) appreciates the opportunity to provide input to the V0 draft of the HLPE-FSN report on “Reducing Inequalities for Food Security and Nutrition.” IFT is a global organization of approximately 12,000 individual members, in 95 countries, who are committed to advancing the science of food. We believe that science is essential to ensuring that our global food system is sustainable, safe, nutritious, and accessible to all. For this reason, we are encouraged to see this report addressing inequalities and inequities in global food security and nutrition.

IFT applauds the HLPE for examining inequalities within the agri-food system and we recommend a deeper look at the middle-segment of the food supply chain and how food science & technology can be part of the solution in achieving greater equity in food and nutrition security. As an example, food science and technology has made significant contributions in reducing the cost of food through packaging and processing technologies that allow foods to be safe and stable for longer periods of time. It is acknowledged multiple times in the report that food processing has improved the affordability and safety of food, yet this is positioned as a disadvantage for healthy diets as it is assumed all processed foods are of poorer nutritional quality than fresh foods. However, this is not always the case as there are many processed foods that provide important nutrition and as mentioned in the report, households that lack a stable energy supply for cooking, have poor sanitation and water access, or are juggling multiple familial care burdens, often depend on these foods. IFT encourages the HLPE to take a more balanced view of the role of processed foods in enabling food and nutrition security and suggests in addition to boosting agricultural research (p 101), there should also be a boost in food science and technology research that is focused on providing more nutritious

processed foods that are safe and affordable for disadvantaged groups. These technologies could include innovations that minimize spoilage of fresh fruits and vegetables to reduce cost and food waste as well as technologies that can increase nutrient density of foods and reduce food components/nutrients to limit (e.g., saturated fat, added sugars, sodium) while achieving consumer acceptable sensory qualities.

IFT would also caution including “innovation and technology” as a section in “the systemic drivers and root causes of FSN inequalities”. As already noted above and in the report, innovations, such as those in the Green Revolution have led to incredible improvements in food and nutrition security. While there may be unforeseen consequences that should be addressed, positioning these innovative solutions as causes of FSN inequalities is not warranted. In fact, the most recent FAO Science and Innovation Forum in October 2022 highlighted the “centrality of science, technology and innovation for agrifood systems transformation.” Further, in chapter 5 of the HLPE report, digital *technologies* are recommended to help reduce inequalities across the food system. IFT would recommend that innovations and technology be positioned as solutions but with a greater emphasis on utilizing a lens of equity in the development and expansion of innovations and technologies. Using a lens of equity may help prevent future unforeseen consequences to inequalities as well as build greater trust in science and technology. Lack of trust in science is one of the major drivers preventing uptake of new innovations and technologies.

IFT believes the science of food and application of technology are important for transforming the food system to ensure food and nutrition security for all. Food scientists and technologists share a commitment with the HLPE-FSN and the CFS to improve nutrition and food security globally. We hope the HLPE will consider our comments to continue to support advances in food science & technology research and development with a lens to equity. Please contact Anna Rosales, Senior Director Government Affairs and Nutrition (arosales@ift.org) if IFT may be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Anna Rosales
Senior Director Nutrition and Government Affairs
Institute of Food Technologists