



17 November 2014, Rome - FAO has published a comprehensive pocketbook of nutrition-related data covering all regions of the world ahead of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) taking place in Rome this week.

Food and Nutrition in Numbers – a pocket-seized compendium dedicated to the state of nutrition worldwide— offers diverse data and visualizations highlighting trends on such topics as micronutrient deficiencies, overweight, obesity and non-communicable diseases from 1990 to the present.

Additionally, it offers indicators on the links between nutrition, health and the environment.

Readers can find detailed data on such topics as food prices, food consumption, agriculture-related carbon emissions and land use, among others.

“The pocketbook is a useful reference for policy makers, as it provides an overview of various aspects of nutrition at country, regional and global levels,” said Josef Schmidhuber, Deputy Director of FAO's Statistics Division.

“That's the starting point for evidence-based food policy analysis, and for getting a more complete picture of health and environmental impacts associated with nutrition,” he added.

In pockets and on phones

Those interested in food and nutrition issues will be able to access the pocketbook on their portable devices via a mobile-friendly [web app](#) and [online PDF](#) version. Small, pocket-sized print versions will be made available to delegations attending ICN2 -- including more than 100 ministers, and representatives from civil society -- who are gathering in Rome to discuss the nutrition challenges of the 21 century. The pocketbook will serve as a tool for delegations to compare and discuss country data during the conference and to inform policy-makers at home.

Nutrition and development

Nutrition is fundamental for development, according to Anna Lartey, Director of FAO's Nutrition Division. “A country that does not pay attention to the nutrition of its citizens will pay dearly in health costs and loss of productivity and this can significantly reduce its economic development”, she said.

Trends

The pocketbook data shows that while progress has been made in reducing the percentage of hungry people globally (Millennium Development Goal 1c on halving the proportion of undernourishment is still within reach), the more ambitious 1996 World Food Summit target of reducing the number of hungry people by 2015 remains out of reach.

What's more, some two billion people are micronutrient deficient – which means they lack the vitamins and minerals they needed to lead a healthy and productive life.

At the same time, there has been an increase in food waste and obesity globally.

“This means the world produces far more food than it needs, and we are leaving increasingly deep resource footprints, in terms of land and water use, carbon emissions, environmental degradation and other aspects of food production,” according to Schmidhuber.

The pocketbook aims to highlight these external aspects of nutrition by providing concrete data on the impacts of our current food systems.

From data to action

The pocketbook also reveals data gaps that need filling, and may inspire countries to start processes to gather missing information and make it available.

“In addressing malnutrition, it is not just enough to collect more data—data must guide action,” emphasized Lartey on the eve of ICN2, which provides an opportunity to harness political momentum for collaboration across all sectors to address malnutrition.

Ministers will gather Nov. 19-21 at FAO Headquarters in Rome for ICN2, where they will adopt the Rome Declaration on Nutrition and a 60-point Framework of Action that is meant to provide guidance for appropriate policy commitments by national governments.

“We live in a world of plenty and it’s remarkable how much more food agriculture has produced over the past decades,” added Schmidhuber. “But what is equally remarkable is that in this world of plenty, we still have 800 million who don’t consume enough calories and 2 billion who don’t eat well – this is why this conference is so important.”

FAO's new pocketbook on nutrition can be accessed online [here](#) .