

The Way Forward

Accelerating nutrition action in a changing environment

We—a group of experts from across research, academia, civil society organizations, the private sector, governments, donors, and regional organizations who gathered at the Micronutrient Forum 7th Global Conference in Accra, Ghana, from September 28 to October 1, 2026—fundamentally believe that good nutrition is a human right. It builds healthy, resilient, and prosperous societies. Yet, the world is far off track to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero Hunger by 2030, despite modest gains in recent years. According to *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2026*, 645 million people globally were undernourished in 2025 and close to 2.7 billion people could not afford a healthy diet, while a [2024 analysis in The Lancet Global Health](#) estimated that more than half of the world's population has inadequate dietary intakes of at least one micronutrient. Progress toward the 2030 global targets to improve maternal, infant, and young child nutrition—addressing stunting, wasting, overweight, low birthweight, and suboptimal breastfeeding practices—remains slow and uneven, and we are [*losing ground*](#) on previous reductions in anemia among women and girls.

Nutrition is at risk from the multiple, complex challenges and megatrends facing the world today, including the growing impact of conflict and displacement, population mobility (including urbanization), climate change and climate-related natural disasters, as well as rising food, fertilizer, and fuel prices. Drastic cuts to official development assistance (ODA) in the past two years have dramatically worsened already constrained fiscal capacities to manage these shocks, and to protect and build on nutrition gains. Now more than ever, we need evidence, innovations, and investments to guide policymakers as they navigate this new reality and to make the case for elevating nutrition as a priority with multiple benefits for personal well-being and national prosperity. The conference in Accra demonstrated the resilience of the nutrition community and showed that we can do more with less when we have opportunities to share evidence and data, learn from one another, and build cross-country networks and learning platforms.

The conference focused on three main questions:

- How do we ensure progress in nutrition for the most vulnerable in a new reality of funding cuts, climate change, conflicts, and displacement?
- How do we harness innovations in science and technology for progress in nutrition and health?
- What new models of collaboration and integration can enable countries to scale up and support their nutrition programs and make investments in agriculture, climate, and health more impactful for nutrition?

Over four days, we examined new evidence and lessons from program implementation, shared practical approaches that can be scaled, and aligned research, program, and policy priorities for the final push toward the 2030 goals. Holding the conference in Africa gave us a firsthand view of the continent's leadership: regional frameworks, such as the Kampala Declaration and the African Union's new [Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme \(CAADP\) Strategy and Action Plan \(2026–2035\)](#), which places nutrition at the core of Africa's agricultural policies, demonstrate that commitment.

From the conference, eight key recommendations emerged that apply across all regions for strengthening nutrition now and in the long term:

1. Scale up what works and remove barriers to scale. Highly cost-effective and evidence-based interventions, such as large-scale food fortification, multiple micronutrient supplementation during pregnancy, small-quantity lipid-based nutrient supplementation, and vitamin A supplementation, can improve micronutrient nutrition and health and save lives, and they are ready to be scaled with adequate financing and delivery mechanisms. New evidence from countries provides critical insights into how to scale up, how to maintain momentum, and where new investments are needed to remove barriers. Removing these barriers will require innovation in supply chains and delivery mechanisms; aligned standards and regulations; support for local production; increased country access to innovative funding mechanisms; integration with social protection programs to reach the most vulnerable; continued access to information and knowledge systems; stronger regional and national leadership; and the embedding of these interventions in countries' broader food system, health, and nutrition policies.

2. Protect nutrition in humanitarian emergencies and conflict-related contexts. We strongly condemn the use of food as a weapon of war. We know that famines not only claim lives today but also inflict irreversible intergenerational trauma and damage. International law is clear that no child should be deprived of life-saving nutrition interventions. Yet, in 2025, [10 million children](#) in food-crisis settings were severely malnourished, and an estimated four out of five children in conflict areas, such as Gaza, Sudan, and Myanmar, were facing emergency levels of acute food insecurity. Humanitarian access is critical to ensure that essentials, including food, water, and medicines, reach those in need. There are encouraging examples from contexts such as the northern Sahel, the Central African Republic, and Somalia of how civil society, governments, and development partners in fragile regions are protecting nutrition outcomes during emergencies by using multiple delivery systems for targeted nutrition interventions, including ready-to-use therapeutic foods to treat acute malnutrition and community-led initiatives. Many humanitarian contexts are chronic and predictable. Taking a humanitarian–development–peace nexus approach can lead to more sustainable nutrition outcomes and better protect productive capacity and human capital.

3. Promote healthy and sustainable dietary shifts in a changing food landscape. There is growing pressure globally to promote healthy diets for all, while protecting the planet and navigating trade-offs, contextual differences, and equity concerns. Healthy diets are high in a diversity of nutritious and safe foods, adequate in micronutrients, balanced in dietary energy, and limited in foods high in salt, sugar, and unhealthy fats. However, evidence shows that globally, dietary shifts are driving a significant increase in the consumption of foods that are high in salt, sugar, and unhealthy fats, including some ultra-processed foods, while the intake of healthy foods, such as fruits and vegetables, continues to be inadequate. These persistent challenges and changes to the global food landscape can hamper the diversity and micronutrient adequacy of diets, especially among vulnerable groups. Contextualized solutions that take a diet-centered approach are needed. Increasing demand for nutritious foods is the starting point and will need to be complemented by addressing the barriers throughout food systems, such as designing food environment policies on taxes and subsidies that incentivize the consumption of nutritious foods and disincentivize unhealthy

products and their marketing; improving storage and transportation to reduce nutritious food loss; making nutrient-rich traditional and indigenous crops strong business propositions; and developing nutrient-rich crops that are more resistant to climate extremes and restore soil health.

4. Work across sectors to identify and reap the co-benefits of nutrition integration. Improving nutrition outcomes requires interventions across a range of sectors and issues, including health, agriculture, social protection, and climate. In humanitarian settings, it also requires greater integration between relief, development, and peacebuilding. Where nutrition data systems are under pressure, integration with non-health data systems can improve efficiency. At a time when resources are scarce, nutrition integration offers greater impact and efficiency gains. Since the launch of the Global Compact on Nutrition Integration at the Paris 2025 Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit last year, we have been learning more about what works: political commitment at the highest levels; costing, implementing, and monitoring national nutrition plans; accountability systems that can identify and track results and budgets; and existing multisectoral platforms that bring the stakeholders together in common purpose. Additionally, appropriate private sector engagement and accountability have been a recurring theme, and we need to see industry as part of the solution, not only as part of the problem. Recent examples in large-scale food fortification and local production of nutritious foods show what is possible. Millers and food producers are working alongside governments to expand the reach of nutritious foods, including fortified foods, and digital tools and data are improving transparency and building trust between industry and regulators. Integration also means identifying and building on co-benefits across social protection, climate, agriculture, education, humanitarian response, and health. Evidence supports interventions with multiple benefits—such as sustainable agriculture practices and gender equity strategies—but more evidence is needed from contexts where it matters most, and evidence generation must inform financing, particularly in fragile settings where co-benefits for resilience, human capital, and stability are greatest.

5. Invest in and strengthen regional, national, and subnational nutrition leadership and capacity. We heard loud and clear from stakeholders across the continent of Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean that, in an era of shrinking development assistance budgets and growing global uncertainty, national leaders, governments, institutions, and local communities are stepping up and must continue to do so. Countries that have better protected nutrition outcomes through repeated global and climate-related shocks share common features: effective policies and legislation; shock-responsive social protection systems; champions among high-level political leaders and in parliament, communities, and traditional leadership structures; and transparent, trackable, and accountable budget allocations for nutrition. This political commitment was embodied at the conference by H.E. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang, Vice President of Ghana, alongside other high-level political nutrition champions from Ethiopia, Nigeria, and the wider West African region. Examples from Pakistan and Ethiopia show how institutionalized, shock-responsive social protection can protect nutrition outcomes among vulnerable women and children during economic and climate-related shocks. Strengthening these systems requires sustained investment in institutional capacity and in nutrition leadership development for the next generation through education, structured training, mentorship, and South–South learning platforms. Regional nutrition leadership programs, national nutrition data platforms, and large-scale food fortification alliances offer models that can be replicated and scaled, but these require intentional and sustained resources to be effective.

6. Safeguard and expand information systems across the full nutrition data value chain, from prioritization and collection through analysis, communication, and use. Reliable, timely, and credible information systems are the basis for robust policy, program, and investment decisions, and even more so when investments and resources are scarce. Evidence from diverse country experiences, including in Ethiopia, Ghana, Bangladesh, Uganda, Rwanda, and Malawi, demonstrates that data have shaped policies and regulations, mobilized financing, guided program design and

scale up, improved the targeting of interventions, and supported real-time improvements in program delivery. These gains depend on information systems that are often fragile, fragmented, and dependent on external financing—vulnerabilities now intensified by the decline in ODA. Efforts are underway to protect these systems, ranging from embedding them in government institutions with costed plans to sustaining and improving the cost-effectiveness of major survey platforms and strengthening the use of routine administrative data. At the same time, rapid innovations in technology offer a real opportunity to do things differently: modeling, remote sensing, and artificial intelligence can make data collection, consolidation, and analysis faster and less costly, and expanded access to existing data and country-centered analytical and communication tools can bring evidence closer to decision-makers. These innovations complement rather than replace primary data; they can bring efficiencies, but safeguarding the generation of high-quality data remains essential.

7. Invest in nutrition research and innovation. With the growing number of complex crises in a resource-constrained world, new research in nutrition sciences and program implementation is more important than ever. Accelerated investments in fundamental, translational, and applied research, innovations, and knowledge sharing, and in strengthening the use and uptake of new evidence in related training, programs, and policies, are critical for understanding the extent and causes of poor nutrition, finding solutions, and improving the efficacy and equity of investments. New research is focused on the timing and optimal dosing of micronutrient interventions to improve their efficacy, while research on fortified food vehicles and programs that extend reach, such as low-cost, widely consumed condiments, shows promise for improving equity. Research also leads to better insights, for instance, on the damaging health effects of deficiencies of the less frequently studied micronutrients; on the need for integrated interventions to address the multiple causes of anemia; and on why the critical window of the first 1,000 days, from conception to 24 months, should be expanded to 8,000 days to include childhood and adolescence. More evidence is needed to implement the integration agenda, to elucidate how regenerative agriculture and the use of indigenous and traditional foods can improve dietary intakes and nutrition, to contextualize solutions, and to adapt to emerging realities. Continued investment is also needed to advance and strengthen implementation and data science approaches that can help inform how and why interventions work, for whom, in which contexts, and how they can be adapted to accelerate the translation of evidence into policy and practice.

8. Invest in long-term, predictable, accountable, and coherent financing for nutrition, including in humanitarian and more fragile contexts. The sudden and rapid decline in ODA in the past two years provides an important and urgent opportunity to build more resilient and sustainable sources of financing for nutrition—both public and private finance. For public finance, many options exist, including better leveraging government and multilateral investments across sectors, such as climate, health, social protection, and agriculture; decentralizing budgeting and ensuring effective disbursement of financing; domestic co-financing matched by multilateral development assistance; investing in debt relief and debt swaps; or repurposing harmful subsidies. For private finance, debt, equity, and environmental, social, and governance (ESG) investing in agri-food must be tied to nutrition outcomes, not just yields or livelihoods. Advocating for nutrition investments will require a coherent and effective narrative for how nutrition can help deliver on a range of national priorities, including jobs, climate action, and improved health and education outcomes.

Call to Action

In a changing environment, we leave Accra with a strong sense of urgency, possibility, and resolve. Hard-fought nutrition gains are increasingly at risk and immediate, coherent action is needed to help save lives and realize the health and economic potential of good nutrition for individuals, communities, and nations. We must scale up cost-effective interventions that work and protect nutrition during humanitarian emergencies. We must honor and be accountable to commitments for nutrition, such as those made at the N4G Summits. And we must continue finding ways to promote healthy and sustainable dietary shifts, integrate nutrition into other sectors, and collaborate more effectively to make the most of scarce resources.

As experts and leaders who gathered at the Micronutrient Forum 7th Global Conference, we saw the power of new data, evidence, innovations, and leadership as drivers of change, and we are concerned that these foundations of nutrition progress are not sufficiently recognized and resourced. We therefore call on all stakeholders to:

- 1 Safeguard and expand nutrition information systems at national and subnational levels.** Timely, reliable, and accessible data, generated through robust survey and routine nutrition information systems and supported by digital tools, artificial intelligence, and other innovative technologies, are needed to anticipate emerging threats, target resources, and track, monitor, and evaluate progress.
- 2 Invest in nutrition research and innovation.** With the growing number of complex crises in an ever-warming world, nutrition research continues to be critical for anticipating future threats, to building resilience, and to adapting to emerging realities. Investments in regional and national research institutions are needed to ensure research and innovations reach those most in need.
- 3 Invest in nutrition leadership.** The leaders of today and tomorrow need to be equipped and empowered with knowledge and skills to advocate for and contribute to the complex and integrated solutions that determine their futures. Investments in leadership development through education, structured training, mentorship, and South–South learning platforms are needed to enable countries to grow the leaders of today and tomorrow, who can help shape future nutrition agendas.
- 4 Invest in long-term, predictable and coherent financing for nutrition programs, data, research, and leadership development.** As ODA declines, governments, multilateral development banks, and private investors must protect and grow domestic nutrition budgets, make nutrition an explicit and measured objective of investments in agriculture, education, social protection, and climate, and use pooled and blended financing vehicles to co-finance nutrition programs at scale.

Now is not the time to pull back. We must act on what we know works and invest in data, research, and leadership—the necessary infrastructure for advancing the nutrition agenda toward 2030 and beyond.

About this Statement

This Way Forward Statement is issued by the Micronutrient Forum based on a synthesis of the evidence presented in the conference program and thought leadership provided before and during the conference by more than 50 scientific, program, and policy experts who are members of the Micronutrient Forum's conference program subcommittee, conference committee, and Board of Directors. As a collective and expert statement, it is intended to guide decision-makers, leaders, and advocates across sectors and accelerate global, regional, and national policy and financing agendas that safeguard nutrition and, ultimately, ensure progress in nutrition for the most vulnerable in a new reality of funding cuts, climate change, conflicts, and displacement. It does not imply endorsement by the conference participants or co-sponsors.

