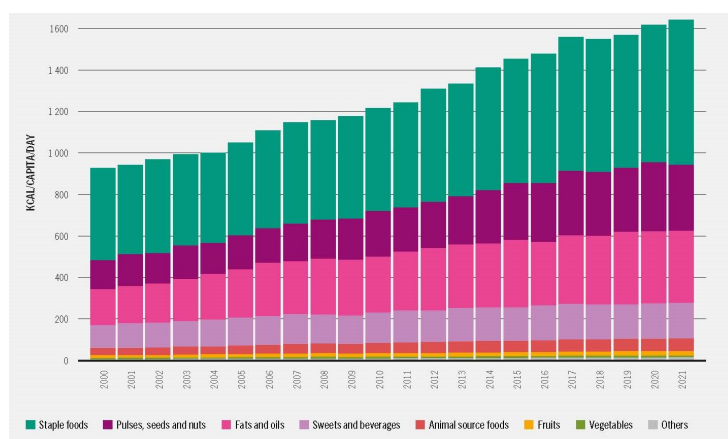


FAO report offers guidance and data on integrating nutrition goals into food trade policies

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A new report from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) shows that international trade in food and agricultural products has thrived in recent decades and significantly contributes to food and nutrient diversity, availability, and affordability worldwide.

At the same time, trade can, in some contexts, be an accelerator of unwelcome changes in dietary patterns, boosting consumption of foods with low nutritional value, and high in fats, sugar and salt. This highlights the need to develop trade policies that are coherent with national nutrition and public health objectives, according to *The State of Agricultural Commodity Markets* (SOCO) 2024.

“The expansion of global food trade has been influenced by multilateral trade rules that have shaped a freer, fairer, and more predictable trade environment, which, along with an increasing number of regional trade agreements, has promoted trade in food,” said FAO Director-General QU Dongyu.

The report, entitled *Trade and Nutrition: Policy Coherence for Healthy Diets*, emphasises the need to strengthen policy coherence between trade and nutrition sectors to make sure that trade does not undermine diet quality and contribute to rising rates of obesity and overweight.

It also notes that links between trade and nutrition are intricate and heterogeneous, and warrant closer attention. As incomes rise, a welcome effect of development, import demand for ultra-processed foods rises even faster, underscoring the utility of enabling policymakers to consider the role of nutrition.

International trade, on average, doubles the diversity of foods available in a country, catalysing a more diverse food supply

and diet, which is a net plus for nutrition goals, especially in countries with less diverse geographies such as Kiribati or Norway. Dietary diversity is key for the adequacy of micronutrient supply.

Trade-driven diversity also leads to a more equal distribution of nutrients such as vitamin C, calcium, and zinc, which is key given that the domestic food production of many countries does not meet the nutrient requirements of their populations. SOCO 2024 presents ample data on how global flows of critical nutrients fill such gaps.

Food prices tend to be lower in countries that are open to trade. This finding applies across the board including staples, fresh foods, and processed foods.