



**World Food  
Programme**

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## **EVALUATION REPORTS**

*Agenda item 6*

*For consideration*

**E**

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## **SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT OF THE NUTRITION POLICY (2012–2014)**

Executive Board documents are available on WFP's Website (<http://executiveboard.wfp.org>).

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## NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

**This document is submitted to the Executive Board for consideration.**

The Secretariat invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document to contact the focal points indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation of WFP's 2012 nutrition policy, commissioned by the Office of Evaluation, was requested by the Board at the time of the policy's approval. The evaluation is strategically relevant given the importance of nutrition in WFP's work and the global development agenda, and WFP's involvement in international nutrition partnerships.

The nutrition policy had broad implications: it sought to influence how WFP undertakes almost all of its operations while advocating a substantial expansion of nutrition programmes. The evaluation found that the policy was relevant and timely. It provided a useful analytical framework, distinguishing between nutrition-specific interventions, which address malnutrition directly, and nutrition-sensitive interventions, which address its underlying causes. It was consistent with WFP's mandate and coherent with WFP's Strategic Plans. It rightly emphasized the importance of multi-sector and multi-stakeholder approaches and partnerships in addressing chronic and acute malnutrition.

The policy drew on the growing body of evidence about undernutrition, including the significance of stunting. However, some of its prescriptions and recommendations were not – and still are not – adequately supported by evidence. Other weaknesses included omission of important issues such as overnutrition and a superficial treatment of gender. The policy had a practical orientation, but was overambitious in its implied targets for an expansion of WFP nutrition programmes. It focused too narrowly on product-based solutions, with insufficient attention to the complementary factors that are recognized in its analytical framework.

The policy is widely understood and accepted throughout WFP, and management's commitment to nutrition is reflected in the increased deployment of nutritionists at the regional and country levels. However, dissemination of guidance to support policy implementation has not kept up with staff demand, and important guidance gaps remain. For example, WFP is still in the early stages of adapting to the implications of nutrition-sensitive programming. Given the scale of such programmes, this is an important area for continued work.

Initial results include upgraded nutrition specifications for the commodities WFP procures, but nutrition programmes have not scaled up to the extent envisaged by the policy. There has been rapid growth – albeit it from a low base – of programmes to prevent stunting, but beneficiary numbers in other focus areas such as treatment and prevention of acute malnutrition have not

increased. This reflects donors' scepticism about the evidence for the effectiveness of supplementary feeding programmes in preventing acute and chronic malnutrition, and about WFP's role in non-emergency contexts.

The policy advocated working through partnerships and seeking greater coherence among United Nations agencies. WFP has played a proactive role in the Scaling Up Nutrition movement and other partnerships, but progress towards greater coherence among United Nations agencies has been regrettably slow.

The evaluation makes recommendations about: i) revising, updating and further developing the nutrition policy and linking it to WFP's next Strategic Plan; ii) improving policy guidance and dissemination; iii) conducting better monitoring and operational research; iv) developing capacity within WFP and continuing the commitment to multi-sector partnerships; and v) addressing systemic issues that constrain resource availability.

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## **DRAFT DECISION\***

The Board takes note of "Summary Evaluation Report of the Nutrition Policy (2012–2014)" (WFP/EB.2/2015/6-A) and the management response in WFP/EB.2/2015/6-A/Add.1, and encourages further action on the recommendations, taking into account considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

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\* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the Decisions and Recommendations document issued at the end of the session.

## INTRODUCTION

1. When the Board approved WFP's nutrition policy in 2012,<sup>1</sup> it requested an evaluation in 2015. This independent evaluation, conducted between December 2014 and June 2015, provides an evidence-based assessment of the policy's quality, initial results and factors affecting its implementation.
2. The evaluation's methods included:
  - an elaboration of the underlying theory of change and assumptions,<sup>2</sup> linked to an evaluation matrix;
  - five country desk studies, including telephone interviews;<sup>3</sup>
  - reviews of the programme design of 38 operations<sup>4</sup> in 15 countries;<sup>5</sup>
  - over 130 internal and external stakeholder interviews;
  - an electronic survey of 154 WFP staff<sup>6</sup> from Headquarters, regional bureaux and country offices;
  - a review of documentation and data available at WFP Headquarters;
  - a gender analysis; and
  - a workshop with an internal reference group to review draft recommendations.
3. This early evaluation necessarily focused on initial policy results, with an emphasis on learning. It faced some limitations in WFP's data, including inconsistent beneficiary monitoring and a lack of disaggregated data on nutrition expenditures. Desk studies facilitated rapid assessment and were invaluable although providing less depth than country visits. The team gathered and triangulated ample evidence to justify the findings.

## CONTEXT

4. The nutrition policy was adopted in the context of WFP's shift from food aid to food assistance. Unprecedented global attention to nutrition has manifested in international partnerships such as the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement, inspired by robust evidence of the benefits of appropriate nutrition, particularly during the first 1,000 days of life from conception until age 2 and the efficacy of various nutrition interventions.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The nutrition policy was approved at the 2012 First Regular Session and its follow-up at the 2012 Annual Session.

<sup>2</sup> The theory of change analysis reflected implicitly throughout the evaluation.

<sup>3</sup> Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Lesotho and South Sudan were selected to offer a variety of: geographic areas, operation types, income levels, country office sizes, population sizes, nutrition profiles, procurement sources, pillars of the nutrition policy represented in country portfolios, and involvement in the Renewed Effort Against Child Hunger and undernutrition (REACH) and Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) partnerships.

<sup>4</sup> All relevant projects with a nutrition component.

<sup>5</sup> The desk study countries plus Bolivia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea Bissau, Indonesia, Iraq, Nepal, Pakistan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Uganda and Yemen, which were selected using similar criteria.

<sup>6</sup> A response rate of 47 percent.

<sup>7</sup> As presented in *Lancet* 2008 (371): 417–40 and its follow-up in *Lancet* 2013 (382): 452–77.

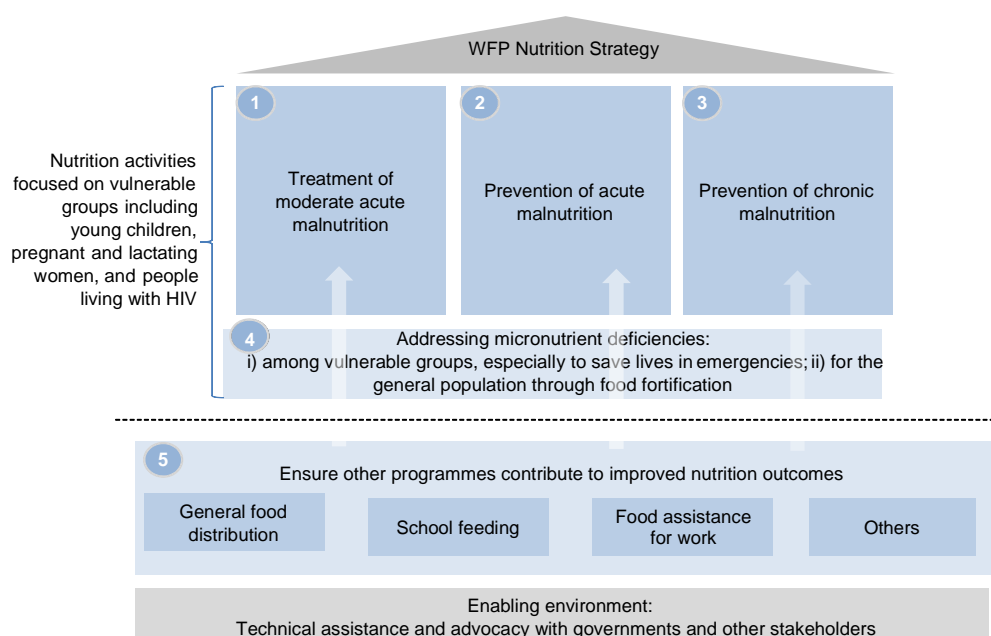
## THE POLICY

5. The policy described WFP's mission with regard to nutrition:

“... to work with partners to fight undernutrition by ensuring physical and economic access to a nutritious and age-appropriate diet for those who lack it and to support households and communities in utilizing food adequately. WFP ensures access to the right food, at the right place, at the right time.”

6. The policy proposed that WFP pursue this mission through programmes and operations in the five priority areas depicted in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Nutrition policy framework**



7. Although it did not completely break with preceding policies, this policy adopted a more integrated approach with novel elements that:

- distinguished between nutrition-specific interventions (Areas 1–4) and nutrition-sensitive interventions (Area 5);<sup>8</sup>
- highlighted the need for multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder partnerships with national governments, other United Nations agencies, non-governmental organization (NGOs), the private sector, academia and donors;
- focused attention on stunting and prevention of both chronic and acute malnutrition;
- explicitly committed to “scale up high-quality food assistance programming”; and
- made capacity development of governments and partners a specific objective.

<sup>8</sup> Nutrition-specific interventions “address the immediate determinants of foetal and child nutrition and development”. Nutrition-sensitive interventions “address the underlying determinants of foetal and child nutrition and development” (Executive Summary of *The Lancet* Maternal and Child Nutrition Series, 2013 – [www.thelancet.com](http://www.thelancet.com)).

8. In addition to the last two points stated above, the other objectives of the policy were to:
- serve as a resource, advocate and thought leader for food-based nutrition interventions to address undernutrition; and
  - strengthen WFP's internal systems, skills, processes and capacity for nutrition leadership and high-quality programming.
9. The policy sought to influence how WFP undertakes its existing operations while advocating for expanded nutrition programmes to support all areas of the policy framework. It proposed intervention criteria<sup>9</sup> for Areas 1–3 that implied a very substantial expansion of nutrition programmes. It also anticipated implementation through a reallocation of existing resources, apart from a one-off extra-budgetary requirement of USD 15 million for roll-out activities, to be provided mainly through a trust fund supporting the Nutrition Capacity Strengthening Plan (NCSP).

## KEY FINDINGS

### Quality of the Policy

#### ⇒ *Clarity and comprehensiveness*

10. The policy was timely and accessible, and provided a useful analytical framework for nutrition (Figure 1). It broadened WFP's focus appropriately by including nutrition-sensitive as well as nutrition-specific areas of intervention. However, there has been a lack of follow-up guidance on nutrition-sensitive programming, reflecting the general scarcity of knowledge of what works in this area, and of guidance on how WFP should work with governments to build nutrition governance. The increasingly important issue of obesity/overweight – part of the “double burden” of malnutrition<sup>10</sup> – was not mentioned. The policy's treatment of gender was superficial, reflecting the weakness of WFP's gender policy at the time.

#### ⇒ *Evidence base*

11. The policy linked its discussion of nutrition within WFP to wider debates and cited available evidence, which was strong in areas such as including the physiological requirements for nutrients. However, some prescriptions and recommendations were not (and still are not) adequately supported by evidence. There was strong evidence that treating moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) saves lives; however there was – and is – much less evidence on the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of supplementary feeding programmes in preventing malnutrition. The policy's emphasis on supplementary feeding understandably reinforced external (and internal) perceptions of WFP as too product-focused.

<sup>9</sup> For example: “Where stunting prevalence is at least 30 percent ... or in high risk situations, WFP recommends that all children age 6–23 months and all pregnant and lactating women in affected areas receive a nutritious dietary supplement to meet their required nutrient needs.”

<sup>10</sup> Includes both undernutrition and overweight.

⇒ *Coherence*

12. In focusing on the most nutritionally vulnerable people, the policy was coherent with international standards, while its scope was broad enough to allow WFP to respond appropriately to needs in varying contexts. It was also consistent with WFP's mandate and generally coherent with its strategies and other policies, although there is scope for greater cross-fertilization among policies – such as between the nutrition policy and the cash and voucher policy. In relation to coherence with other agencies, the policy provided a clear statement of WFP's envisioned role across different aspects of nutrition. This implied a wider role, particularly in the prevention of chronic malnutrition in development and emergency contexts, was not intended to displace that of any other agency. Further work was envisaged to clarify other United Nations agencies' roles in nutrition.

⇒ *Practicality*

13. The policy had a practical orientation. However, the criteria proposed for nutrition-specific interventions implied much larger programmes that would require more funding, which was not fully consistent with the stated intention to rely mainly on existing resources.

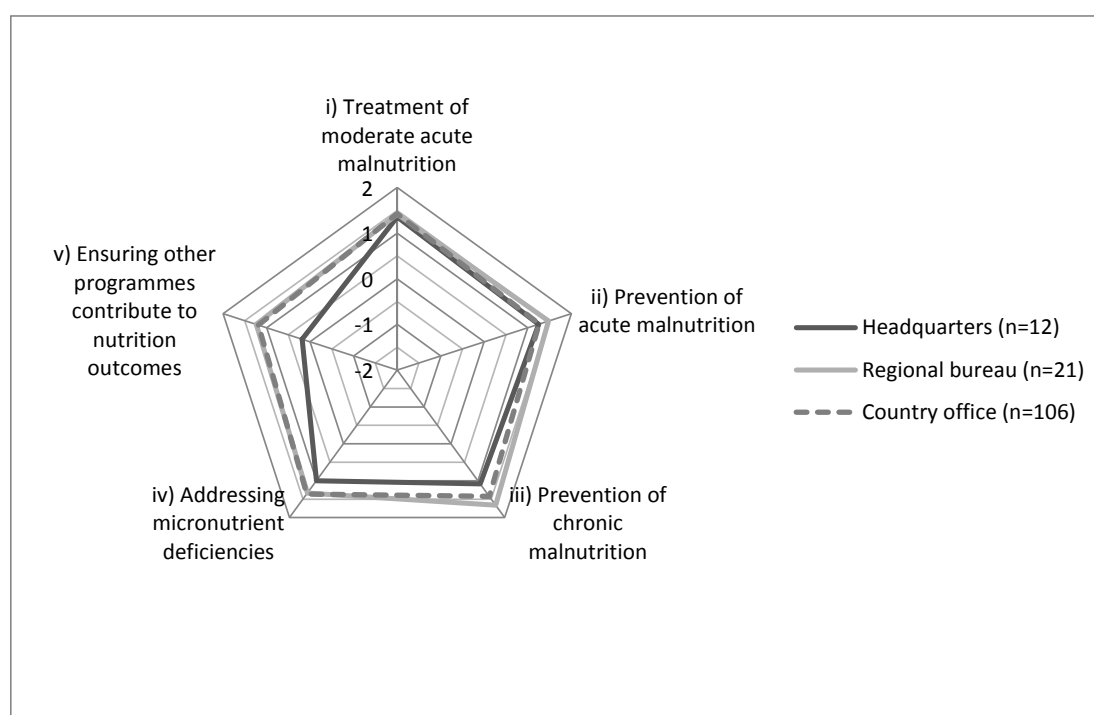
### **Initial Policy Results**

14. It was not realistic at this stage for the evaluation to measure results at the outcome or impact levels; it focused on immediate results in terms of WFP activities and outputs. In addition, it assessed understanding of the policy, the pertinence of monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and changes in WFP programming, including in the gender dimension.

⇒ *Understanding of the policy*

15. The policy is reasonably well known and accepted within WFP, but staff reported seeking more follow-up guidance to operationalize it. All five of the policy's focus areas are considered important, but their perceived importance varies by where respondents were located (Figure 2). Notably, the importance of nutrition-sensitive approaches is not fully recognized by respondents at Headquarters. This is unfortunate and may contribute to external perceptions that WFP is not fully committed to multi-sector approaches.

**Figure 2: Internal perceptions of the importance of the nutrition policy's five focus areas**



Source: Electronic survey

16. Among external stakeholders, several interviewees echoed the evaluation team's concerns about over-stretching the evidence base, and contended that: i) WFP puts too much emphasis on food-based solutions, neglecting the multi-sector, multi-stakeholder approaches also advocated by the policy; and ii) WFP is in danger of encroaching on developmental areas of work where other agencies – including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) – should lead. The evaluation team noted the risk of a double standard: WFP may be criticized for focusing too narrowly on food products, and then for straying beyond its mandate when it places food products in a wider context.

⇒ *Monitoring and evaluation to support the policy*<sup>11</sup>

17. Nutrition indicators specified in successive Strategic Results Frameworks (SRFs) have shifted from the impact to outcome and output levels in order to focus on the direct influence of WFP programmes. More work is required to roll out and supplement indicators where necessary; for example, when surveys are required country offices often struggle with methodologies and resources. Areas 1–4 include indicators that can be used to measure policy results if data are properly collected. The evaluation found: i) regular availability of data on treatment of MAM and beneficiary participation for most countries; ii) significant gaps in nutrition-sensitive programme indicators; and iii) little systematic monitoring of how gender dynamics operate within communities or programmes beyond data disaggregation by sex. There is limited guidance on how WFP can support and use national M&E systems. Funding for M&E was a major issue that was not adequately addressed when the new indicators were initiated.

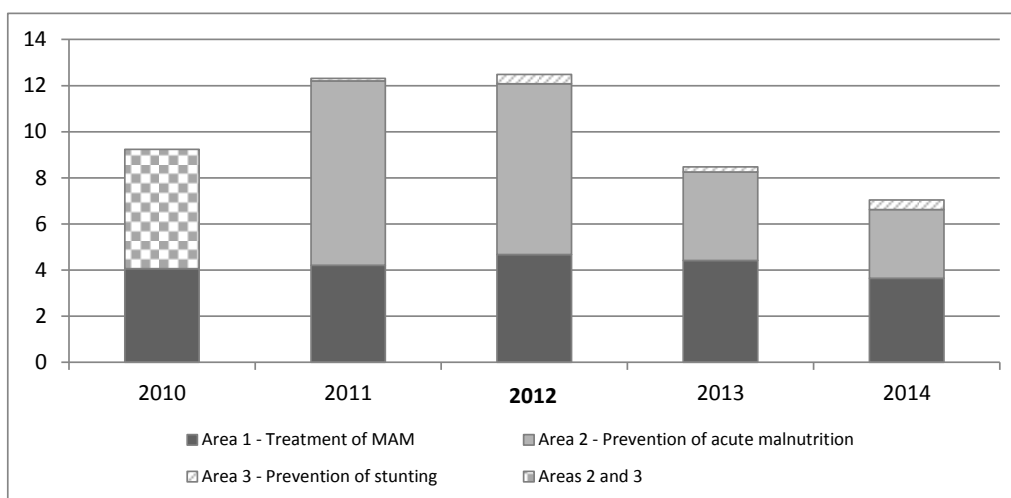
<sup>11</sup> See also operational research discussion in paragraph 36.



⇒ *Changes in portfolio programming, design and implementation*

18. The policy envisaged an enhancement of WFP's nutrition programmes (mainly through use of the right foods) and a significant scale-up (as implied by the proposed thresholds for intervention in Areas 1–3). The evaluation found that food remains the dominant modality through which WFP delivers its nutrition interventions, with only limited use of cash-based transfers and vouchers.
19. The evaluation faced significant data limitations.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, with the available data, it did not find evidence of a significant scale-up of WFP's nutrition-specific programmes as intended by the policy. As Figure 3 shows, actual numbers of under-5 beneficiaries:
- of nutrition-specific interventions peaked in 2012 – the year of the policy's approval – and have fallen since;<sup>13</sup>
  - receiving treatment for MAM contracted by an average of 5 percent per year between 2011 and 2014, but even with the decrease it is still the largest of the three areas of intervention;
  - of activities aimed at preventing acute malnutrition contracted by an average of 28 percent per year; and
  - of activities aimed at the prevention of stunting have grown by an average of 52 percent per year since 2011, albeit from a modest baseline.

**Figure 3: Actual beneficiaries\* in nutrition policy areas 1–3, 2010–2014 (millions)**



Sources: Data Collection Telecoms Application (DACOTA) and Standard Project Reports

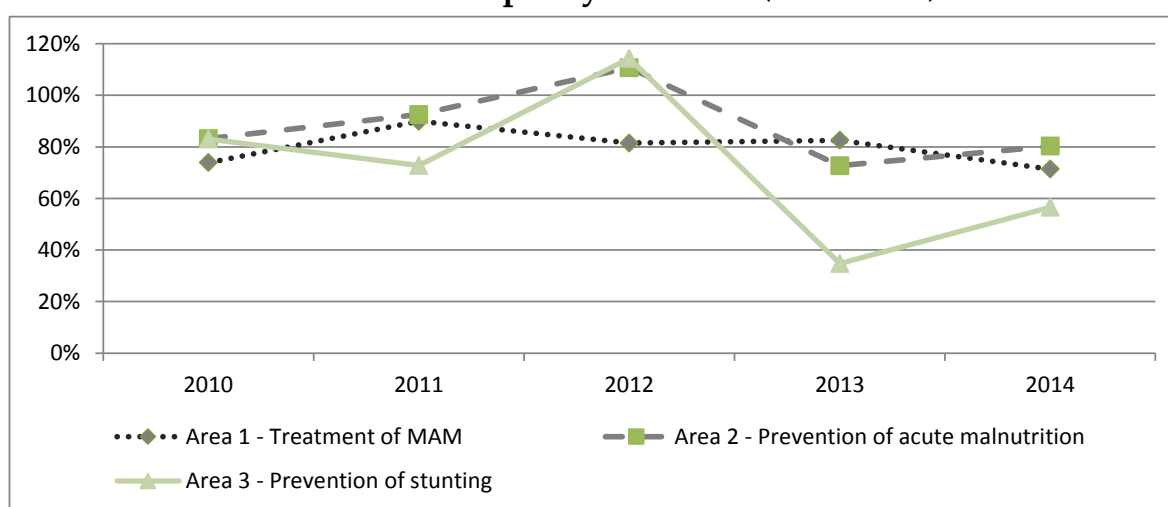
\* Analysis limited to children under 5 – see footnote 13.

<sup>12</sup> WFP reporting systems do not disaggregate expenditure data by activity type (such as nutrition). As a proxy, the evaluation used the numbers of beneficiaries that had received nutrition assistance.

<sup>13</sup> This analysis was restricted to Areas 1–3 because data on beneficiaries receiving assistance in Area 4 are captured in Areas 1–3. For Area 5, the evaluation was unable to distinguish between potential and actual nutrition-sensitive interventions. Prior to 2013, WFP's reporting systems did not disaggregate pregnant and lactating women (PLW) beneficiaries by type of intervention, therefore the analysis is limited to children under 5. PLW beneficiaries ranged from 20 percent to 30 percent of total beneficiaries over the evaluation period.

20. The aggregate decline in under-5 beneficiaries since 2012 is no proof of contraction in nutrition operations overall because data are not available for PLW or beneficiaries of nutrition-sensitive interventions.<sup>14</sup>
21. WFP's nutrition programmes tended to reach fewer beneficiaries than initially planned (Figure 4). In recent years, this gap has been particularly large for prevention-of-stunting activities. Funding has been a constraining factor, as it appears to have been less forthcoming for Areas 2 and 3 than for Area 1; this tallies with interview data suggesting that donors are less willing to finance WFP's prevention work.

**Figure 4: Actual beneficiaries as a percentage of planned, for nutrition policy areas 1–3 (2010–2014)**

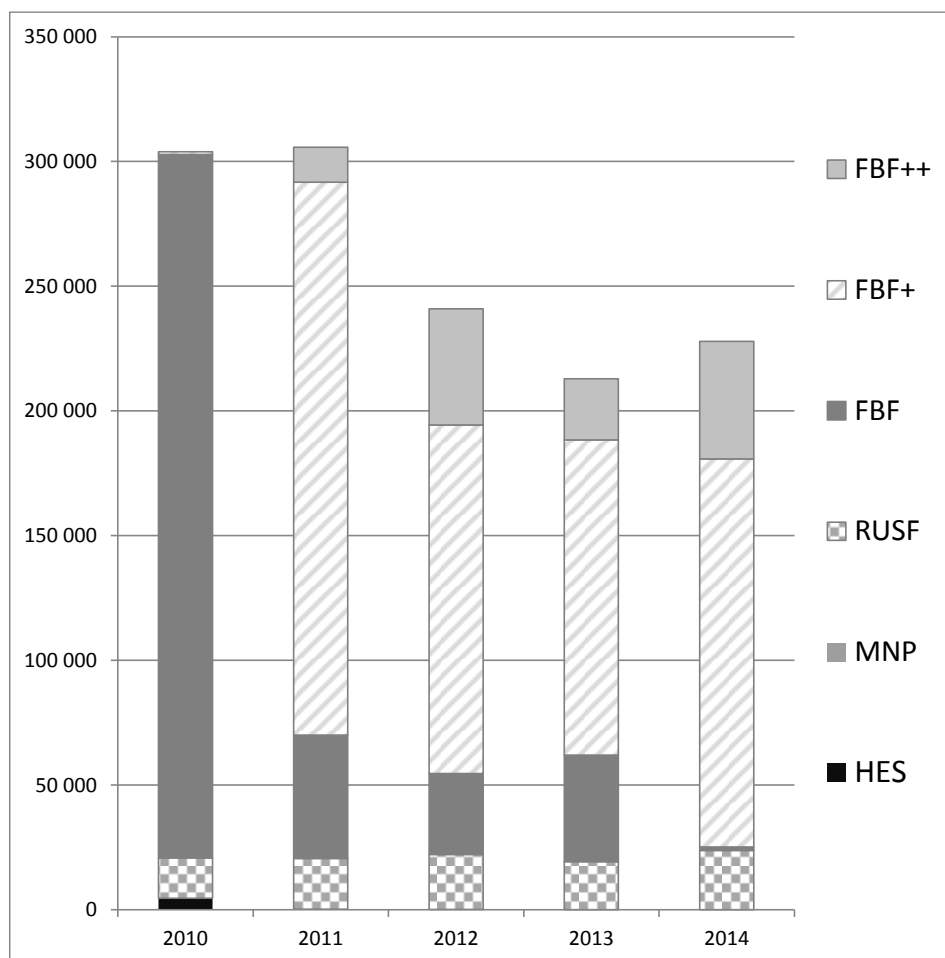


Source: DACOTA. Because there was no separate reporting for Areas 2 and 3 in 2010, it was not possible to disaggregate achievement data, so the percentage was assumed to be 83 percent for both.

22. The evaluation found important changes had been made in the design of WFP's nutrition programmes, some of them before the policy was adopted. In line with the policy's strong emphasis on the use of appropriate nutritious foods, the desk studies and electronic survey identified greater standardization and use of more nutritious foods as pivotal changes in WFP's nutrition-specific programming – including use of specialized nutritious foods (SNFs) and nutrition-sensitive programming. While data on SNF procurement for WFP do not suggest a greater use of SNFs overall, they do indicate a shift towards SNFs with upgraded nutrition specifications. (Figure 5).

<sup>14</sup> WFP's other programmes are much larger in terms of beneficiary numbers than its nutrition programmes and can achieve nutrition benefits if they are implemented in nutrition-sensitive ways.

**Figure 5: SNF procurement by type of food, 2010–2014 (mt)**



Source: WFP Procurement Division

FBF: Fortified blended food such as corn-soya blend

FBF + ("SuperCereal"): Improved micronutrient profiles and processing changes – dehulled soybeans to reduce fibre

FBF ++ ("SuperCereal Plus"): new product with milk and oil in addition to above changes

RUSF: ready-to-use supplementary food

MNP: micronutrient powder

HES: a high-energy supplement produced in Malawi and Zambia in 2010

⇒ *Gender dimension of policy implementation*

23. About 63 percent of beneficiaries of nutrition-specific interventions from 2010 to 2014 were women: in addition to girls under the age of 5, PLW were a main beneficiary group. However, addressing gender requires more than targeting women, and the evaluation found only fragmentary evidence of the use of gender analysis – such as the role of gender in household decisions – as a basis for programme design, implementation or evaluation.

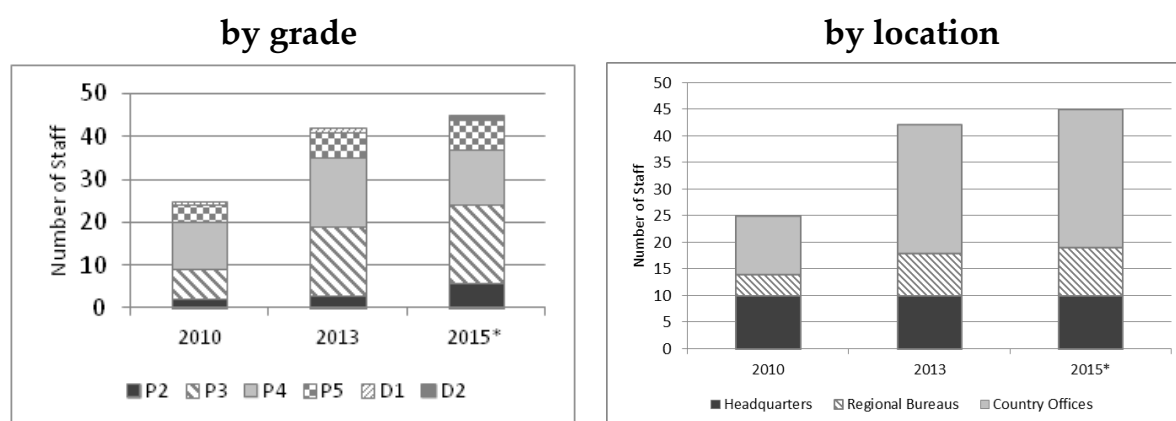
⇒ *Adaptations at corporate level*

24. The policy envisaged that WFP would support the policy through advocacy and improved internal systems that would help support its roles in partnerships and develop government and partner capacity as well as support implementation of WFP nutrition operations, as described below.

## Staffing

25. The policy proposed additional nutrition staff and the better understanding of nutrition throughout WFP. Since 2010, WFP has employed 80 percent more international nutrition staff, mostly at junior levels (Figure 6). In line with the Fit for Purpose initiative, most of this growth has been in country offices, with some staff also posted to regional bureaux. WFP currently employs more than 70 national nutrition staff, but data on trends since 2010 was unavailable.

**Figure 6: WFP international nutrition staff in nutrition posts (2010–2015)**



Source: Nutrition Division (OSN)

\* As of February 2015

## Partnerships

26. WFP has remained active in the humanitarian cluster system, the Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger and undernutrition (REACH) partnership<sup>15</sup> and the SUN movement. However, progress towards the policy's aim of a joint understanding on a United Nations partnership for nutrition has been regrettably slow – although this is not entirely within WFP's control. Within the SUN movement, WFP co-chairs the private-sector network and participates actively in the United Nations network. WFP has also hosted the REACH secretariat. In early 2015 it was agreed that the REACH secretariat should also become the secretariat for the United Nations network supporting SUN, and that a United Nations Global Nutrition Agenda would soon be published. It remains to be seen whether this constitutes a major step towards the enhanced partnership and agreed division of labour among United Nations nutrition agencies as envisaged by the policy.
27. Slow progress on global United Nations coordination has not necessarily prevented practical collaboration at the country level, although this is reported often to depend on personalities. WFP staff perceived relationships with UNICEF as the strongest – and the most improved – among the four main nutrition-focused United Nations agencies.
28. WFP has continued to have effective partnerships with the private sector, especially related to the development and improvement of quality nutritious foods, and their adaptation to local contexts.

<sup>15</sup> REACH is a collaboration among FAO, UNICEF, WFP and the World Health Organization (WHO) to support selected countries in addressing undernutrition through multi-sector, multi-stakeholder approaches.

## Capacity in partner countries

29. The country desk studies underscored the fact that programme effectiveness often depends on partners' complementary activities. WFP food products often need to be combined with other actions to become fully effective: for example, MAM programmes should be linked to effective health services. There was only occasional evidence of government capacity development being incorporated into nutrition programmes, and staff have sought more guidance and skills for working in this area.

## Factors Explaining Initial Results

### ⇒ *Consultation and dissemination*

30. Progress in operationalizing the policy reflects a generally good understanding of it by staff, supported by senior management. Ownership among WFP's nutritionists and senior management was ensured by extensive consultations, particularly with the Board, before its adoption. However, consultation with country offices and other United Nations agencies was less thorough.
31. The evaluation found most available nutrition guidance to be of good quality, but there was scope for improvement, particularly with regard to how the policy areas relate to one another and how WFP interventions fit into multi-sector approaches. There is still little guidance on nutrition-sensitive programming or gender considerations. While much guidance has been drafted, especially by the Nutrition Division (OSN), its dissemination has been limited.

### ⇒ *Resources for implementation and WFP's operating environment*

32. The policy indicated that most resources for implementation would come from adjustments to existing budgets and financing. This has been the case in relation to the changing food procurement patterns depicted in Figure 5 while Figure 6 above shows a significant increase in specialist nutrition staff. Dedicated resources for the NCSP supported OSN's roll out of the policy. Nevertheless, finance and staffing were experienced as major constraints: more than 75 percent of electronic survey respondents identified them as limiting factors. Resource constraints particularly limited prevention activities, for which support from donors has not matched the policy's ambitions.

### ⇒ *Internal and external factors*

33. There has been strong management support of the policy and recent organizational restructuring with the creation of a single Headquarters Nutrition Unit and decentralization to regional bureaux and country offices was positive. However, the disruption associated with this and other changes was a constraint on the NCSP and systematic policy roll-out.
34. The internal environment has thus been generally supportive. The main caveat – not unique to nutrition operations – is the difficulty for WFP to adopt long-term strategic approaches (as implied by the policy emphasis on prevention and on work to develop government and other partner capacity development) in the context of typically short-term funding cycles.
35. The most limiting external factor is lack of funding for scaling up programmes envisaged by the policy. For several major donors, this reflects: i) WFP's perceived comparative advantage in emergency and/or conflict-affected contexts and states; ii) the view that WFP over-emphasizes food products to the exclusion of broader interventions; and

iii) concerns that there is a lack of evidence for some of the standard interventions proposed in the policy – a point supported by the evaluation’s own analysis.

⇒ *Feedback and learning*

36. In its approach to academic partnering and operational research related to nutrition, WFP is rightly concerned with gathering better evidence and recognizes the importance of academic partners for improving the quality and credibility of research in which WFP participates. However, partly because of country offices’ autonomy, it has been difficult to develop a coherent operational research programme, and research efforts are spread too thin. WFP’s operational research has not focused sufficiently on the programming aspects of ensuring that nutrients of proven physiological value are effectively and cost-effectively delivered at scale.<sup>16</sup>

⇒ *Sustainability*

37. To ensure sustainability, it is right to emphasize strengthening national governments’ nutrition governance. But this requires stamina, longer-term funding and skills in advocacy and policymaking. It is uncertain whether national governments can afford, over the longer-term, SNF procurement and distribution central to WFP’s approach. Long-term sustainability depends on nationally owned multi-sector strategies that address food systems as a whole.

## CONCLUSIONS

### Quality of the Policy

38. The policy was timely and its analytical framework useful. It continues to be relevant to WFP’s mandate and generally coherent with WFP strategies. However, while there is good evidence on physiological nutrient gaps, some of the policy’s prescriptions were not – and still are not – adequately supported by evidence. In addition, the policy omitted some issues – including the “double burden” – that are important for WFP’s nutrition response in some countries. The policy’s treatment of gender was largely superficial.

39. The policy had a practical orientation and expected to mainly adapt the allocation of existing resources, but it was unrealistic to expect prevention programmes to be funded on the scale envisaged. In areas such as nutrition-sensitive programming practical guidance was lacking, although this reflected a global knowledge gap.

### Initial Results

40. The policy is reasonably well understood within WFP but could be further supported with new guidance and more dissemination of existing guidance. However, external stakeholders are not necessarily convinced by the policy’s arguments for expanding preventive supplementary feeding.

41. The approach to M&E in the new SRF indicators is logical, but is still a work in progress. For instance, there is a lack of indicators for nutrition-sensitive programming; operational research needs to be improved.

<sup>16</sup> Relevant topics include the effects of cash-based transfers on nutrition in different contexts.

42. There is no evidence that the major scale-up of nutrition activities envisioned in the policy has occurred. Activities to prevent chronic malnutrition have expanded rapidly, but slower than planned and beginning from a low baseline. WFP is in the early stages of adapting to the implications of nutrition-sensitive programming; given the scale of such programmes, this is an important area for continued work.
43. The policy is credited with standardizing WFP's use of nutritious foods, with upgraded specifications for foods procured by WFP. The deployment of more nutritionists indicates that WFP is making nutrition a higher corporate priority, but there remains scope for expanding at all levels WFP's nutrition capacity in terms of numbers of staff and staff skills.
44. WFP has not sought to displace other agencies' roles and has shown commitment to global nutrition partnerships through REACH, SUN and the clusters. But progress has been regrettably slow on a United Nations partnership framework for nutrition. At the country level, the extent of United Nations collaboration depends largely on personalities; WFP staff judge the relationship with UNICEF as the strongest, and the most improved in recent years.

### Factors Affecting the Initial Results

45. Positive factors relating to the policy included strong ownership of the policy, extensive consultation with the Board leading up to its adoption and dedicated NCSP resources for roll-out.
46. However, dissemination of the policy was limited despite trust-fund support. Financing and staffing have been major constraints, undermining initial expectations that implementation could rely on existing budgets. Funding for prevention activities has been particularly scarce, reflecting scepticism about the underlying evidence and widely held perceptions that WFP's comparative advantage is in short-term emergencies.
47. The policy has a strong analytical framework, but the sustainability of its results is doubtful given the difficulties of supporting national capacity development and legitimate concerns about whether product-focused interventions even if effective can be sustained by national governments. Long-term progress must depend on nationally owned, multi-sector strategies that address food systems as a whole.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

48. The evaluation made the following eight recommendations concerning the policy. The first three recommendations concern policy revision.
49. **Recommendation 1: Revision.** Do not revise the nutrition policy at this time. Ensure that nutrition objectives are embedded in the next Strategic Plan and consider a full revision of the nutrition policy during 2017, aligned with the new Strategic Plan. Submit annual nutrition policy updates to the Board in 2016 and 2017. [Executive Board and Office of the Executive Director (OED) for decision-making; OSN to prepare annual updates]
50. **Recommendation 2: Development.** Develop the policy further through subject papers to support improved guidance for policy implementation; include nutrition considerations in other WFP policies and guidelines. Subject papers should address such gaps as nutrition-sensitive programming and the "double burden", and become building blocks for the policy's revision after the new Strategic Plan is approved. This work should be undertaken in the framework of the United Nations Global Nutrition Agenda, collaborating

with other United Nations agencies as much as possible. [OSN and other units involved with nutrition-sensitive approaches (2016–2017)]

51. **Recommendation 3: *Guidance for implementation.*** Strengthen practical and targeted guidance to WFP staff and management, taking in account international best practices and findings from this evaluation and WFP’s operational research. New guidance should cover gender analysis and monitoring taking into account WFP’s new gender policy. Ensure that guidance is disseminated to staff regularly and is easily accessible. [OSN liaising with the Policy and Programme Division (OSZ), the Gender Office, regional bureaux and country offices (2015, 2016 and 2017)]
52. WFP needs to address current weaknesses in M&E of nutrition operations in order to strengthen learning and programme management in a dynamic policy and contextual environment. Regular monitoring needs to be complemented by specific operational research that addresses practical knowledge gaps regarding the effective delivery of nutrition interventions.
53. **Recommendation 4: *Monitoring and evaluation.*** Strengthen M&E of WFP nutrition operations by supporting country offices in reporting on the Strategic Results Framework indicators. This will involve: i) providing guidance on methodology; ii) providing guidance on supporting national M&E systems; and iii) ensuring consistent prioritization of quality M&E and utilization of its results (Recommendation 8). [OSN working with OSZ, the Performance Management and Monitoring Division (RMP) and regional bureaux (2016 onwards)]
54. **Recommendation 5: *Operational research and knowledge management.*** Develop, disseminate and implement a comprehensive operational research strategy that supports effective design, delivery and use of research within WFP and assures its quality. Develop a research agenda that addresses gaps in knowledge required for effective programming. The operational research strategy should emphasize effective partnering with international and national research bodies to guarantee quality and ensure the credibility of findings while strengthening national research capacity. [OSN and the Programme Innovation Service (2016)]
55. Recommendations 6 and 7 concern WFP’s internal capacity and its ability to work effectively in partnerships. While WFP needs staff with technical skills to implement nutrition programmes, policy and advocacy skills are also important. Effective action on nutrition requires multi-sector approaches (in support of government-led national nutrition plans, whenever possible); this requires collaboration and partnerships. Playing an effective (but not always leading) role in partnerships is the best way to address fears of “mission creep” and demonstrate WFP’s added value.
56. **Recommendation 6: *Capacity development in WFP.*** Ensure an appropriate balance of competencies among country office and regional bureaux staff to ensure high-quality implementation of nutrition programmes and enable effective advocacy with external stakeholders – particularly governments – and effective support for national strategy and planning processes. [OSN, the Human Resources Division and senior management in Headquarters and regional bureaux (2015 onwards)]
57. **Recommendation 7: *Collaboration and multi-sector partnerships.*** WFP should continue to stress the importance of multi-sector partnerships in addressing undernutrition and supporting national nutrition policies and strategies. It should actively participate in these partnerships in emergency, transition and non-emergency contexts. It should also seek a cohesive United Nations nutrition strategy and actively participate in mechanisms such as SUN, the cluster system, REACH and the Committee on World Food Security. Its external



communications strategy should make a measured case for WFP's added value in both emergency and development contexts. [Board, OED and OSN at the global level; regional bureaux and country offices for country and regional partnerships (with support from the Government Partnerships Division for donor relations); and the Rome-based Agencies Division, the Committee on World Food Security and the Private Sector Partnerships Division (2015 onwards)]

58. This policy was adopted with the understanding that the costs of implementation would be primarily met by prioritization and reallocation of existing budgets. Although this has happened in areas such as improving commodity nutrition specifications, the evaluation found significant human and financial resource constraints on the policy's roll-out. These affect capacity (Recommendation 6) and M&E (Recommendation 4), and reflect systemic issues within WFP as well as overall availability of funding. With regard to resource mobilization, WFP has not yet succeeded in attracting donor funds commensurate with the policy's ambitious scale-up of nutrition interventions. This difficulty in attracting donor funds is linked to scepticism about the legitimacy of WFP's role in non-emergency contexts, and to a lack of strong evidence on cost-effectiveness.
59. **Recommendation 8: *Resourcing the implementation of the nutrition policy.*** Seek to mitigate the resource constraints hampering nutrition policy implementation by addressing their systemic causes. This implies: i) continuing implementation of the Financial Framework Review and other reforms that increase funding flexibility; ii) improving financial monitoring and cost-effectiveness analysis; and iii) continuing to advocate with donors for the longer-term funding required for prevention activities (while strengthening evidence-based advocacy for this support). [Board and OED (strategy); senior management and RMP (implementation and monitoring); Programme Review Committee (strategy and programme development); the Government Partnerships Division (donor relations); and OSN (through nutrition policy updates 2016 onwards)]

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## ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

DACOTA	Data Collection Telecoms Application
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MAM	moderate acute malnutrition
NCSP	Nutrition Capacity Strengthening Plan
OSN	Nutrition Division
OSZ	Policy and Programme Division
PLW	pregnant and lactating women
REACH	Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger
RMP	Performance Management and Monitoring Division
SNF	specialized nutritious food
SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organization