



## Impacting Nutrition through a Fresh Food Voucher Programme in Ethiopia

Side event on the margins of the annual session of the Executive Board, 2021

Tuesday, 22 June 2021, 13:30-14:30

Virtual Event via ZOOM

The World Food Programme (WFP) Nutrition Division invites Executive Board members and partners to a side event showcasing the Fresh Food Voucher (FFV) programme in Ethiopia. The event will be moderated by Ms Allison Oman Lawi, Director a.i., Nutrition Division.

### Context

**In recent years, Ethiopia has made nutrition a key political priority**, notably as an early adopter of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement and the Seqota Declaration, resulting in progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 2 (zero hunger) by significant reductions of wasting and stunting. However, malnutrition rates remain high overall and challenges persist. Ethiopia reports the lowest diet diversity in children in all of Africa, anaemia rates for women and girls of reproductive age remain high, and 30 percent of households have an inadequate energy intake.

**The WFP FFV programme** in Ethiopia is a successful example of a multi-sectorial approach to improve nutrition outcomes. The programme aims to reduce stunting through diversifying diets and feeding practices in rural households enrolled into the national social protection programme in the districts with the highest stunting levels, for pregnant and lactating women and children under 2. By "topping up" social protection transfers, the FFV program increases the access to and utilization of nutrient-dense foods including fruits, vegetables and eggs, while using electronic cash-based assistance (via simple SMS messages) and social and behaviour change strategies. Furthermore, using the analogue mobile phones of the beneficiaries, and Artificial Intelligence, calls and interviews are conducted with beneficiaries on their diet diversity, in order to course-correct the operations, cost-effectively and at scale. In addition, the programme is piloting the provision of off-grid, evaporative cooling units to assist households with the storage and preservation of nutritious foods.

The programme was undertaken with support from the Ethiopian authorities and the private sector, showcasing national financial sustainability and scalability from the Government. Based on positive results reflected through a rigorous external evaluation, including improved dietary diversity among beneficiary mothers and children in poor households, there has been interest in expanding FFV. The Government of Ethiopia has asked WFP and donor partners to work with other sectors (Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Finance) to expand the FFV programme to all districts in Ethiopia with high levels of stunting, to strengthen the nutrition-sensitive approach of the national social protection programme, from 2022 and onwards.

**The FFV programme is one of the game changers within the food system transformation process of Ethiopia** that will be presented at the global United Nations Food Systems Summit. It is an important example of a multisectoral initiative bringing in diverse stakeholders and transformative partnerships across food and social protection systems to achieve better nutrition outcomes.

The linkages between nutrition and social protection remain an untapped opportunity for many national programmes to decrease yearly costs induced by stunting (every year 16.5 percent of the GDP is lost in Ethiopia) and invest in national human capital for future generations. This event will be an opportunity to hear about the lessons learned from various actors, ranging from the host government, donors, experts, and partners and hear about upcoming plans.

## Objectives

1. Demonstrate how food systems can regularly make diets healthier and reduce malnutrition, including through multisectoral partnerships.
2. Highlight the FFV programme in the context of the Food Systems Summit and the Year of Action on Nutrition, with opportunities to mobilize investments and action in support of such transformative interventions.
3. Showcase the successes and challenges of WFP's nutrition-sensitive programming in achieving improved access to, and demand for nutrient-dense foods, to achieve healthier diets in fragile contexts.

## Agenda

- 1. Welcome and introduction**
  - Ms Valerie Guarnieri, Assistant Executive Director, Programme and Policy Development Department, WFP (5 min)
- 2. Opening remarks**
  - Dr. Steven Were Omamo, Country Director, Ethiopia country office (10 mins)
- 4. Roundtable discussion/panel (20min)**
  - H.E. Dr. Lia Tadesse, Minister of Health, Ethiopia
  - Ms Fatouma Seid, FAO Representative in Ethiopia
  - Dr. Namukolo Covic, Senior Research Coordinator, IFPRI
  - Mr Hanspeter Schwär, Senior Policy Advisor in the Division for Transitional Development Assistance, German Development Ministry BMZ
- 5. Q&A session (20 min)**
- 6. Closing remarks**
  - Ms Allison Oman Lawi, Director a.i., Nutrition Division (5 minutes)