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UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event

Water and Nutrition: Harmonizing Actions between the Water and Nutrition Decade. What does it take?

MAR 22, 2023 - 11:00 TO 12:15AM EDT

Organized by:

Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU); UN Nutrition Secretariat; Africa Union Commission; Northwestern University; WASAG; Government of Ethiopia; FAO; Institute for Development Studies; Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy; CGIAR NEXUS Gains Initiative.

Background on the event

In 2015 the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security for the first time published a report that considered the [linkages between water, food security and nutrition](#). And in 2019, the United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition (now UN Nutrition), organized an event in New York to discuss linkages between nutrition and SDG 6 on water and sanitation. Out of the meeting, a working group was formed that put together a discussion paper on [Water and Nutrition. Harmonizing Actions for the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition and the United Nations Water Action Decade](#). While the UNFSS's focus on water was limited, nature-positive solutions were considered and some suggestions for water were developed. Moreover, the Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture established a [Working Group on Water & Nutrition](#). Since then, an increasing number of water-centric declarations has pro-actively considered the importance of linking water, food security and nutrition goals, including the [WASAG Praia Call for Action of 2023](#), and the Pretoria Declaration on Water Use in Agriculture. The event reviewed progress on water-nutrition linkages and identified priority actions to further strengthen outcomes from the two decades.

Water Action Agenda (one paragraph, if possible, please include the link to your commitment in the [Water Action Agenda database](#))

Inter-linked assessments and interventions across water and food systems are essential to achieve progress on SDG 2, SDG 6, SDG 5, SDG 13, SDG 15 as well as SDG 7. Without this integration progress on food security could worsen water security or vice-versa. Only systems thinking can help us overcome growing challenges affecting human and planetary health. The commitment of the session is to engage on intersectoral analyses with governments of Ethiopia, India, Pakistan, Sudan, Uganda and at the regional levels through AUC.

[Jointly improving water, food security and nutrition | Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(un.org\)](#)

Key Issues discussed

- Claudia Ringler (Director, Natural Resources and Resilience, International Food Policy Research Institute) introduced the session and noted that United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition limits water to WASH while the United Nations Water Action Decade is limited to water.
- Virginie Gillet (Land and Water Officer – FAO Land and Water Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, FAO) provided an overview of FAO and UN Nutrition activities, including a nutrition-sensitive agricultural water productivity project and the WASAG (Water Scarcity in Agriculture) Working Group on Water and Nutrition.
- Inga Jacobs-Mata (International Water Management Institute (IWMI), South Africa) discussed the Pretoria Declaration on Water Use in Agriculture and its linkages to nutrition.
- Lyla Mehta (Institute of Development Studies, UK and Norwegian University of Life Sciences and coordinating lead author of the CFS HLPE report on “Water for Food Security and Nutrition”) described the key results of the CFS report including the need to more directly link the Human Right of Water with the Human Right to Food.
- H.E. Seleshi Bekele (Ambassador of Ethiopia to the US) provided several examples of how Ethiopia has improved food security through improved water management.
- Sera Young, Northwestern University and co-author of the UN Nutrition report on harmonizing the water and nutrition decades described the importance of using tools, such as the Human Water Insecurity Experience Scale (HWISE) to more intentionally use water intervention for food security and vice versa.
- Matthew McCartney, IWMI, NEXUS Gains lead and co-author of the UN Nutrition report on harmonizing the water and nutrition decades described the potential of fisheries in irrigation systems to improve food security and nutrition.
- Shakuntala Thilsted, CGIAR Systems Office and Nutrition Impact Platform Coordinator described the importance of focusing on understudied areas, such as water use in food preparation and processing.
- Shiney Varghese, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, co-author of the CFS HLPE report on “Water for Food Security and Nutrition” focused on the importance of **agroecological for water and food security and nutrition based on the recent LCD5 conference.**

Key recommendations for action

- Ensure an integrated approach to Water and Food Security and Nutrition FSN related policies
- Prioritise the most vulnerable and marginalised, including mainstreaming gender and addressing the specific needs of water
- Foster an inclusive and effective governance of water for Food Security and Nutrition
- Implement nutrition sensitive water management
- Ensure the environmental sustainability of diets
- Address social inequities in water-nutrition linkages
- Focus on dark spots in water-nutrition research, such as water use in food processing and preparation
- Consider the importance of joint fisheries-irrigation systems for better nutrition
- Use tools such as the HWISE scales to target joint nutrition and water interventions
- Explore the right to water for Food Security and Nutrition
- Continue to explore projects that support nutrition through water interventions and water security through nutrition interventions
- Elevate water for food security in the Nutrition decade and the important food security and nutrition outcomes of the Water Decade