ICAN Call to Action to G7 Leaders: Put nutrition at the heart of the food security agenda

Agriculture, food security and nutrition work together to ensure that people and economies are healthy and able to reach their full growth and productivity potential. The G7 Schloss Elmau Commitment to lift 500 million people in the developing world out of hunger and malnutrition by 2030 will only be reached with adequate investments across the entire sector, and a transparent plan on how these investments will be implemented and monitored.

Although food security is vital, it does not necessarily result in nutrition security, making any food security gains tenous. For sustainable success, an Italian G7 flagship initiative on food security must work across food security, agriculture and nutrition, with explicit policy and investment priorities for each. Through doing so, Italy has an opportunity to show significant leadership on an area that currently suffers from serious under-investment, resulting in significant loss of life and human potential.

The International Coalition for Advocacy on Nutrition (ICAN), comprising organizations and advocates working to end malnutrition in all its forms by improving policies and scaling up investments for nutrition, calls on G7 leaders to develop a flagship initiative that catalyzes progress on the Schloss Elmau commitment by:

- Making nutrition a central component to the Taormina Initiative;
- Calling for new investments for nutrition under the food security and agriculture agenda at a Nutrition for Growth high-level event this fall;
- Developing a roadmap for meeting the Schloss Elmau and Taormina commitments;
- Focusing on the most vulnerable, especially women and children, regardless of political or migration status.
**Why is nutrition at the heart of the food security agenda?**

Globally, there are around 795 million people who are hungry, but over 2 billion who suffer from malnutrition: the majority of these people are women and children. Neither poverty nor the global malnutrition crisis can be solved through efforts to boost food production alone. Promoting good nutrition, consumption, and diverse and balanced diets is critical for children, adolescents and communities to thrive, and for gains in poverty reduction and food security not to disappear.

**Why is nutrition critical to economic development?**

Poor nutrition is a threat to survival: it underlies almost half of all deaths of children under the age of five. Malnutrition is widespread, with every third person in the world suffering from some form of malnutrition. Global economic losses due to malnutrition amount to roughly $3.5 trillion every year. These losses are greater than annual losses during the 2008-2010 global financial crisis. In Africa and Asia, annual GDP losses attributable to malnutrition average 11 percent, which significantly hinders growth and progress. In an increasingly digitalized world, investment in “brain power” and “grey matter infrastructure” are critical to growing competitive markets, and good nutrition is critical for brain development. It provides the essential building blocks for brain development, helping children to grow, learn, and shape future economies.

The costs of not investing in nutrition are high, and the returns of investing are staggering: every $1 invested in nutrition results in $16 in returns from decreased healthcare costs and increased economic productivity, in addition to saving trillions that would otherwise have been wasted.

**How can agriculture and food security be improved to scale up nutrition?**

Efforts to scale up agriculture and crop production should prioritize crop diversification and improving dietary diversity and nutritional quality of crops. This in turn will promote the availability, accessibility, affordability and consumption of nutritionally rich foods. Commitments to improve food security and agriculture programs must incorporate explicit nutrition objectives and indicators in order to track the impact on people’s nutritional status. It is imperative that the G7 leaders ensure nutrition remains central to any food security initiative announced in Taormina. To learn more, please see the [Generation Nutrition fact sheet](#).

**How else can the G7 initiative contribute to improving nutrition?**

Improvements in nutrition-sensitive agricultural production are one part of the solution. These efforts should go hand-in-hand with evidence-based, high-impact solutions to improve nutrition, such as: maternal micronutrient supplementation, treatment of acute malnutrition in young children, and strengthening infant and young child feeding practices. We know what works, and now it is time to invest in these efforts to deliver greater impact. To learn more about what nutrition-specific investments are needed, please refer to the [Global Investment Framework](#).

**Why does accountability matter in the efforts to improve nutrition?**

In 2015, the G7 made a commitment at the Schloss Elmau summit to lift 500 million people out of hunger and malnutrition by 2030. We call on the Italian government, as part of their presidency, to develop a comprehensive roadmap to meet this commitment, and others made as part of the Taormina Initiative. Ensuring continued accountability for those commitments is especially critical. We support the efforts taken by the Japanese government to improve G7 financial reporting on nutrition in order to track progress toward this commitment. Gender-disaggregated, outcome-based indicators that more fully track progress by including all World Health Assembly nutrition and SDG2 indicators would be a welcome addition. Through its G7 leadership and building on the L’Aquila transparency legacy, Italy can enable us to measure what matters: new financial and political commitments to nutrition.