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"STIMULATING DISCUSSIONS & ACTIONS"

Public Food Procurement and Service Policies Towards Sustainable Diets in Ghana;

A position paper by the Institute of Leadership and Development (INSLA)

Introduction

The health of the populations of countries are vital to production and central to the survival of their economies. The human resource has always been the most important of all resources in the production mix. Amongst myriads of factors, what people eat, stand out in determining their health. There is therefore the need for policy makers to influence food production and sale vis-à-vis the nutrition mix and processing. There is therefore the need for a national dialogue which should translate into a well prepared and enforceable Public Food Procurement and Service Policy in Ghana.

Problem Statement

Unhealthy diets are responsible for millions of deaths worldwide. It is a leading risk factor for death and disability. Diets which include excess salt, sugars and bad fats kill around 8 million people yearly(1).

The UN Sustainable Development Goals consider the issue of food and healthy lifestyle imperative. The parameters of the programme have catered for these concerns. SDG2 aims to end all forms of malnutrition, SDG3 calls for promotion of healthy lives and well-being and SGD12 encourages sustainable public procurement practices.(2)

WHO estimates that, diets relatedNCDs account for 42% of total deaths and 31% of disease burden in Ghana. NCDs kill an estimated 86,200 persons in Ghana with 55.5% of them aged less than 70 years. Diet related NCDs are projected to increase due toun healthy eating lifestyle. Analysis of data in Ghana suggests cardiovascular diseases accounted for 8.9% of institutional deaths.(3)

The 2019 Ghana Healthy Food Environment Policy Index (Food-EPA) country scorecards and priority recommendations for actions; Bench marking Ghana's Policies for Creating Healthy Food Environments produced by the University of Ghana School of Public Health in collaboration with INFORMAS (International Network for Food and Obesity/NCDs Research, Monitoring and Action Support) has highlighted the urgent need for food labelling and regulation of food products in Ghana. (4)

In a COVID-19 address to the Nation on May 31st 2020 in Accra, the President of Ghana; H. E. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo explained that "The risk factors for these diseases (underlining health conditions of living or dying of Covid-19) are being overweight, eating refined foods, too much salt and sugar in meals, ... It is thus, crucial that we ..., adopt healthy eating practices ...., which boost our

immune systems".

Public Food Procurement and Service Policies Action Framework

The World Health Organization (WHO) launched the Action Framework on Public Food Procurement and Service Policies for a Healthy Diet. The purpose of the Action Framework is to support countries to develop, implement, assess compliance and evaluate the effectiveness of a healthy public food procurement and service policy. The focus of the action framework is to promote healthy and sustainable diets, food safety and adequate macro- and micronutrient intake to prevent all forms of malnutrition, the policies ensure that food the government purchases, serves, and/or sells in and through public institutions meet healthy nutrition standard.

A Public Food Procurement and Service Policy sets criteria for food the government purchases, serves, and/or sells through public settings. These criteria should adhere to the core principles of healthy diets, which include:

1. Limit the intake of sugars
2. Shift fat consumption away from saturated fats to unsaturated fats, and eliminate industrially produced trans fats
3. Limit sodium consumption and ensure that salt is iodized
4. Increase consumption of whole grains, vegetables, fruits, nuts and pulses
5. Ensure the availability of free, safe drinking water(1)

Public Food Procurement and Service Policies comes with numerous benefits including public health, economic, increased productivity and educational attainment, boosting culturally acceptable food that is sustainable produced through local agriculture, equity benefits and

large reach.

Initiatives and Efforts to address unhealthy Diets in Ghana

- ✓ Ghana Public Health Act:
  The objective of Ghana Public Health Act 2012 is to promote, safeguard, maintain and protect the health of humans and animals and to provide for related matters.

- ✓ Policy for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases in Ghana:
  The goal of Ghana's NCDs policy is to ensure that the burden of NCDs is reduced to the barest minimum so as to render it of little public health importance and an obstacle to socio-economic development. Leaders and communities will be involved in the planning and implementation of NCD programmes.

- ✓ Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) Document:
  The objectives of the Ghana School Feeding Programme are to contribute to Increase school enrolment, attendance and retention. Reduce short-term hunger and malnutrition amongst kindergarten and primary school children and Boost domestic food production.

- ✓ National Nutrition Policy:
  The goal of the National Nutrition Policy is to ensure optimal nutrition and health of all persons living in Ghana, to enhance capacity for sustainable economic growth and development.

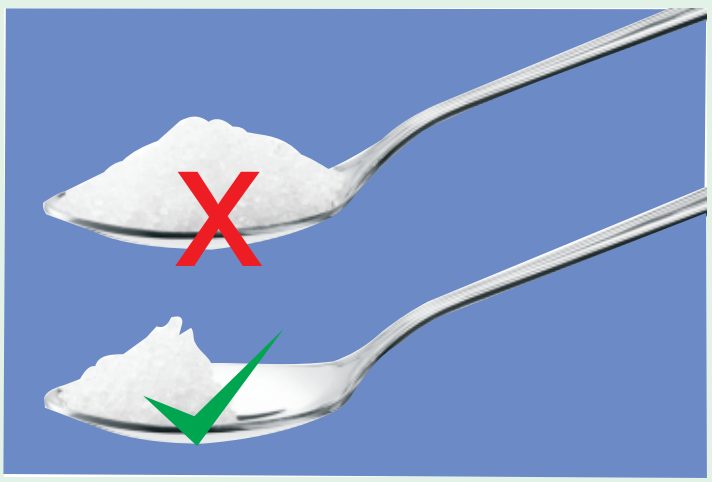
- ✓ Establishment of Healthy Diet Alliance Ghana (HeDAG):
  The purpose of establishing the Healthy Diet Alliance Ghana (HeDAG) is to coordinate Civil Society actions on advocating and educating stakeholders on the availability and affordability of healthy food throughout the country. HeDAG will as much as possible present a common CSO voice in policy making and implementation phase.

- ✓ Trans Fats (FA) Elimination Campaign in Ghana:
  Elimination of industrially produced Trans-Fatty Acids (TFA) from the food supply is critical to achieving the following aims of; decreasing the risk of Coronary Heart Diseases (CHD) and mortality, it will help reduce premature death from non-communicable diseases in Ghana, one of the health targets (Goal 3.4) of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Government and stakeholders can consolidate the gains achieved above by ensuring that, the food being purchase for the school feeding programme and health facilities and food service or sold in public places and places of public use are brought to the standards of the World Health Organizations Healthy Public Food Procurement and Service Policies for a Healthy Diet.

Recommendations

1. Government should develop, adopt and enforce Public Food Procurement and Service Policies to regulate the



production, sale and buying of healthy food in all public places and places of public use.

2. Government should prioritize the production and consumption of healthy and sustainable diets in the National Development Agenda.

3. Government should highlight the importance and benefits of Healthy Public Food Procurement and Service practices at international forums including the UN Food System Summit, Nutrition for Growth Summit, Sustainable Development Goals meetings and any other relevant global platform. .

4. Government should adopt and effectively implement recommendations made by international forums such as the UN Food Systems Summit, Nutrition for Growth Summit, Sustainable Development Goals summits and other relevant global platforms.

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