



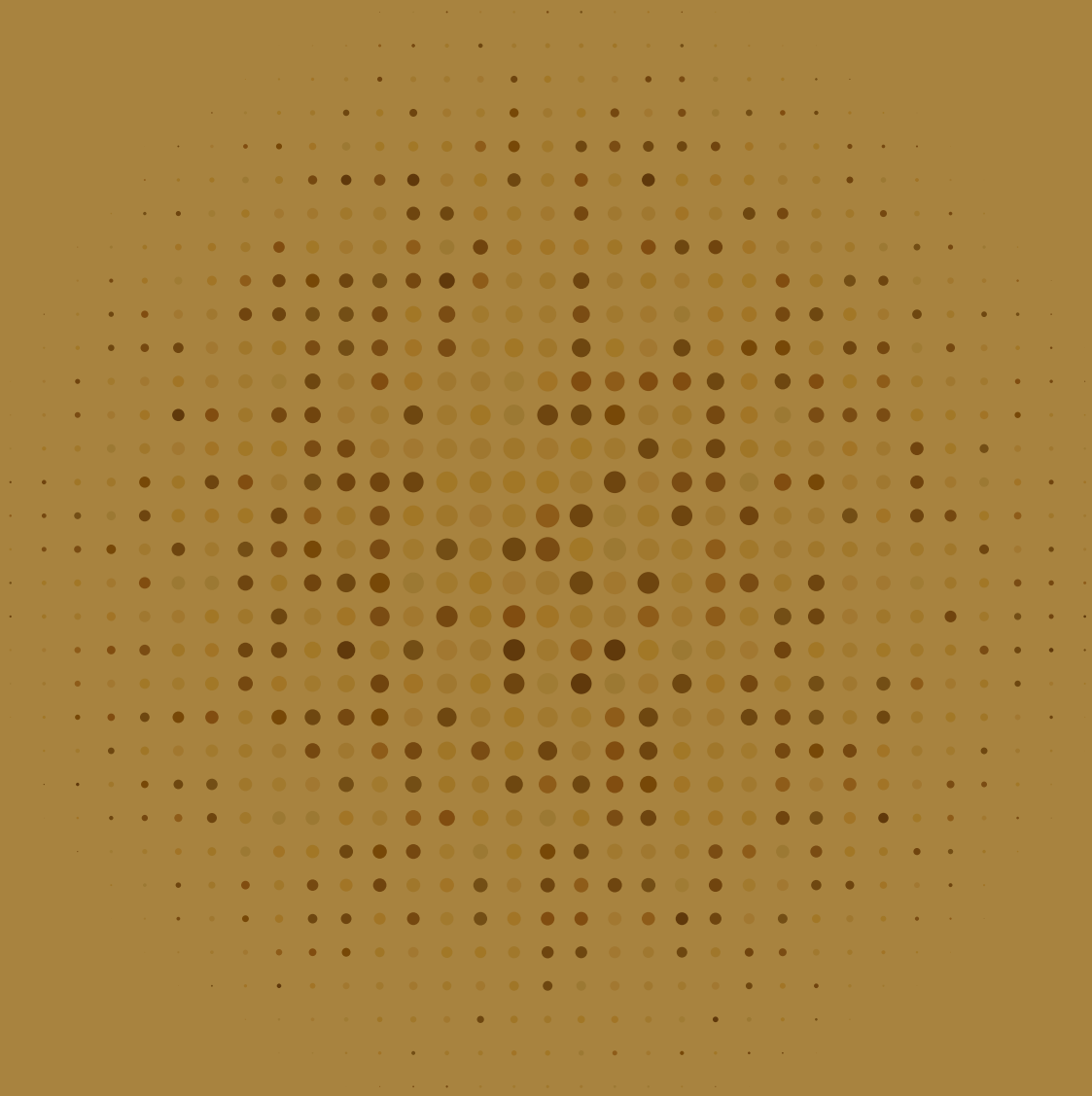
# LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT ON GLOBAL MONITORING OF DIET QUALITY

Conducted on behalf of the Diet Quality Working Group of the  
WHO/UNICEF Technical Expert Advisory group on nutrition Monitoring (TEAM)



World Health  
Organization





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Designed by: Alberto March (Barcelona, Spain)

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## Summary

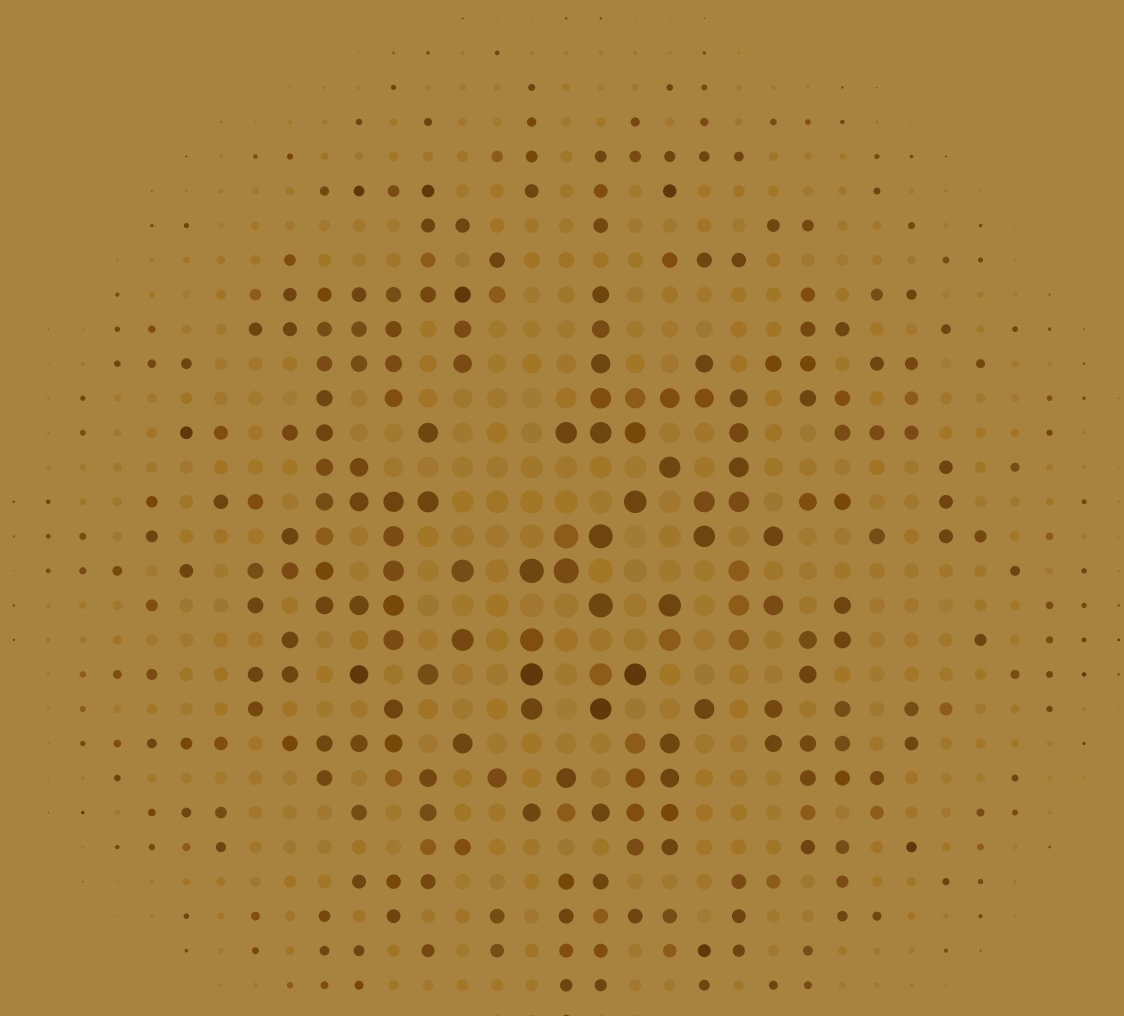
**G**lobally, dietary-related risk factors are the leading cause of poor health and mortality, and it has become increasingly important to understand diet quality and to monitor it globally. Recognizing this need for better food and nutrition monitoring at the global level, the diet quality working group within WHO-UNICEF Technical Expert Advisory group on nutrition Monitoring (TEAM) undertook a landscaping exercise with 15 experts in the field of nutrition, agriculture, and environment to: (i) understand how they define diet quality; (ii) learn about current initiatives to measure diet quality concepts; and (iii) identify improvements needed in the global monitoring of diet quality to which TEAM could contribute.

Different definitions of diet quality have recently emerged from research projects and institutions, but respondents believed that consensus on the definition of “diet quality” or “healthy diets” was lacking. They believed it was the role of normative global agencies to develop a definition that member states could accept and recognize. Having an accepted definition with clear concepts of diet quality could then facilitate the operationalization of diet quality monitoring. Respondents also identified four key concepts that should be monitored globally: (i) consumption and intake to measure adequacy and moderation; (ii) food environment to understand the context and barriers that populations face in order to access healthy diets; (iii) dietary diversity; and (iv) sustainability.

Many respondents acknowledged that the task to monitor diet quality globally is difficult and may not be feasible to the extent desired for all concepts of diet quality. Nevertheless, there is an increasing need of a global diet quality monitoring system. Diets are a key component of nutrition and an immediate cause of both under- and over-nutrition, yet not much is known about dietary intake across the globe. For example, information is needed to better understand dietary changes over time and the trends in dietary intake between countries, within countries, between urban and rural settings, and across different age and gender population groups. Such information would be useful for countries and their governments, who are the primary users of global diet quality monitoring along with researchers, programme implementers, industries and sectors outside of nutrition. Countries would welcome such an initiative given that many countries have developed food-based dietary guidelines but lack ways to assess how their populations are eating, following the guidelines, and how this is changing over time.

To monitor diet quality globally, the global nutrition community will need to address several gaps, including clearly establishing the concepts of diet quality. Other gaps include identifying survey platforms that have the reach to capture such information globally, the ability to collect quality dietary data, and which indicators to use. Further, some age and gender groups lack relevant diet-related indicators. There is a need to evaluate existing survey platforms and improve them, where possible, as some of these platforms already have a wide reach in many countries and collect information that can inform policies and programmes aiming to improve diet quality.

There are several ongoing initiatives working on various aspects of diet quality and ways that TEAM could contribute to this field. Identified initiatives included the Global Dietary Database, the EAT-Lancet Commission on Food, Planet, Health, the International Network for Food and Obesity Research, Monitoring, and Action Support (INFORMAS), FAO/WHO Global Individual Food Consumption data Tool (FAO/WHO GIFT), and the Gallup Global Diet Quality Project. Respondents believed that TEAM can play important roles in diet quality monitoring: (i) convene those working on diet quality to harmonize actions and what is being done by different groups; (ii) set guidelines on what indicators to use to monitor diet quality; and (iii) advocate for diet quality monitoring to donors and countries.



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