

Child centred food systems: Reorienting food systems towards healthy diets for children

Globally, children (0-18 years) are eating poor quality diets. The food system has not been guiding them towards healthier choices. There has been a lack of attention on how to transform food systems to support the nutritional health of children and adolescents. This paper presents a process to identify the actions needed to reorient food systems to become more child-centred from a nutrition perspective. A child-centered food system is one that guides children towards healthier diets, adequate and balanced in quantity and quality.

The paper lays out 8 principles on what a child-centred food system should like and how it should be created.

A food system that guides children towards healthier diets (principles 1-4):

1. Reduces lack of proper nutrition
2. Supports children and their caregivers
3. Incorporates all aspects of food systems
4. Makes healthy diets available, affordable, appealing and aspirational in the context of children's lives

The process of reorienting food systems towards healthy diets for children (principles 5-8):

5. Shifts the system coherently
6. Builds on actions already in place
7. Considers the balance with other food system goals

These principles have guided a systematic process of six steps to identify the actions required to reorient food systems to improve children's diets. The first 3 steps focus on understanding the reality of children's lives in relation to nutritional health. Steps 4 and 5 focus on identifying how food environments and food supply systems could encourage children towards healthier diets. Step 6 brings together the information in steps 1-5 to understand what actions could have a coherent impact on the food system.

The study shows that steps from within the proposed process have been carried out previously, but not coherently as part of one case study. The authors state that research now needs to be combined as a coherent whole. The systematic process presented in this paper requires implementation to see if it is fit for purpose and practical. This is to test if the process can identify effective actions to re-orientate food systems towards a child centred approach.

Reference: Hawkes C, Fox E, Downs SM, Fanzo J, Neve K. Child-centered food systems: Reorienting food systems towards healthy diets for children. *Global Food Security*. 2020;27.
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