

**Peer learning sessions of the 2021 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region**

**Presentation of policy practices as a basis for the peer learning discussion**

**Session 1.2. Accelerating SDG progress in time of pandemic: making healthy diets accessible for all**

<b>Title of intervention, country and name of presenter</b>	<b>Impact of COVID19 pandemic on food security and vulnerability of Armenian families</b> <b>Country – Armenia</b> <b>Presenter – Ashkhen Shirvanyan, Head of Food Safety Division, Ministry of Economy</b>
<b>Brief description</b>	Limited availability, access and utilization of nutritionally diversified food are among main causes of food insecurity and malnutrition in Armenia. In 2019, 15% of population couldn't physically or economically access the food they need for an active and healthy lifestyle and were food insecure, and 6% of Armenians couldn't acquire the food they need to meet their daily needs. Food insecurity is closely linked to poverty (approx. 1 in 4 people live below the poverty line), with regional disparities and a widening gap between the rich and the poor. The COVID19 pandemic has disrupted the income of about 58% of the households, and about half of them have used coping strategies including spending their savings, borrowing money, or purchasing food on credit due to a lack of food or a lack of money to buy food. Though 42% of the HHs received assistance from the Government or other organizations, yet this support was not enough to ensure full access to nutritious food for healthy diets.
<b>Policy goal(s) or challenge(s) to be addressed</b>	Armenia has set a goal to end, by 2030, all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under-five, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons. Reduction of stunting among children under-five by more than two times (from 19% in 2010 to 9% in 2016) showed the effectiveness of strategies being implemented by the Government and international partners, mainly UNICEF, to address child malnutrition, creating a strong basis for further actions. COVID19 pandemic, however, has changed notably the pattern in terms of access to food due to reduction of HHs income. Targeted actions taken by the Government to address the economic and social impact of the pandemic were essential in supporting different sectors of economy and HHs directly, but not enough to ensure full access to nutritious food.
<b>Instruments and proposals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of the evidence on how has the COVID19 affected people's ability to meet their food needs and what is the impact on nutrition, as people shift diets to more shelf-stable and less nutritious foods</li> <li>• Analysis of the Government targeted actions to address social impact of COVID19 pandemic, considering that the main reason for food insecurity and vulnerability in Armenia is poverty/HHs low income</li> </ul>

<p><b>Constraints and difficulties</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COVID19 pandemic has shifted the strategic directions of the Government in addressing food insecurity and child malnutrition, with the urgent requirement to take immediate targeted actions to support different sectors of economy and most vulnerable households to meet their basic food and other essential needs</li> <li>• There is a need to combine COVID19 related and “regular” (being effective before COVID19) strategies and actions</li> </ul>
<p><b>Lessons</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Even before the COVID19 pandemic, we knew that low access to nutritious food is one of the main reasons for food insecurity and malnutrition [child] in Armenia, especially for socially vulnerable households</li> <li>• COVID19 has highlighted and deepened the challenges we have, directing nutrition programming of the Government and partners towards addressing, as a priority, the needs of socially vulnerable groups of population</li> <li>• Inter-sectoral collaboration and strategies are now even more important if further progress in achieving SDG2 and in reduction of child malnutrition is envisaged</li> </ul>
<p><b>Links to additional materials</b></p>	<p><a href="https://www.gov.am/en/covid-19-cragrer/">https://www.gov.am/en/covid-19-cragrer./</a>  <a href="https://www.gov.am/en/covid19/">https://www.gov.am/en/covid19./</a></p>