Bangkok Symposium - Sustainable Food Systems for Healthy Diets

What is the issue?

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- At a time when dietry patterns are changing rapidly, improving nutrition should be central to our debates on food culture.
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- FAO and other UN partners are currently organising a conference on nutrition in Bangkok to ideate for future food policies.
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Why is it critical?

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- Nutritional security is under threat worldwide as our food systems are not properly responding to nutritional needs.
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- The poor are constrained with limited access to nutritious foods due to its un-affordability.
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- This leads to development of monotonous diets that do not provide them with adequate nutrients.
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- For a considerable population of the well-off, taste has increasingly taken precedence over nutrition in our food habits.
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- These factors have led to an increase in non-communicable diseases, which is heavily burdening on our health-care systems.
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- These have the potential to derail the economic progress that is essential for the poor to improve their lives.
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What are the major international efforts?

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- An “International Conference on Nutrition” was organised in Rome by ‘UN Food and Agriculture Organisation’ (FAO) and the ‘World Health Organisation’ (WHO) in 2014.
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- This was followed up last year, with an International Symposium on Sustainable Food Systems for Healthy Diets and Improved Nutrition.
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- This week, experts on nutrition and major players in the food systems sector from across Asia and the Pacific are expected to gather at Bangkok for further discussions.
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- All these actions are expected to better shape the ‘UN Decade of Action on Nutrition’ (2016-2025).
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Who are the other stakeholders?

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- A vast majority of the food we eat is produced by small farmers, many of whom are poor and undernourished themselves.
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- Improvements to food systems must be achieved in ways that benefit their livelihood and nutritional needs.
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- Small farmers are also key to building dynamic rural economies.
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- It is hence critical to provide them with technological inputs that enhances their product valuations in the markets.
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- Investing the all key players of the food supply chain (producers, transporters, marketers) is needed to push the nutrition agenda ahead.
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- Food processing for value enhancement is also another key focus area to produce and deliver more nutritious food.
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Source: The Hindu

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