The Food System:
a prism of present and future challenges for health promotion and sustainable development

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"…………In the 21st century, the purpose of governance should be healthy and sustainable development. There is a growing recognition of the significance of building a bridge between the health promotion agenda and the sustainability agenda: in many cases, the best choices for health are also the best choices for the planet; and the most ethical and environmental choices are also good for health. But too frequently, the two agendas are dealt with in separate debates and policy arenas.

There has not yet been a deep enough effort to link the two agendas and to ensure that they support each others' normative and strategic goals in a more systematic manner. There is also growing awareness of how interconnected many of the major challenges that we face at the beginning of the 21st century are – and policy makers know that working in silos or only at the national level does not provide solutions.

Yet it remains difficult to engage other sectors in joint policy action at all levels of governance, in particular around "wicked problems" for which there is no easy or quick solution. This applies in particular to the greatest challenge in today's world, the increasing inequity between and within countries – with the burdens of unsustainable development falling disproportionably on the poorest. It is therefore one of the key goals of the healthy3 initiative to move from a "silo" to "systems" approach.

Health promotion has always been dedicated to working with others: health is everybody's business. Ensuring a commitment to health across government and by many different societal actors is critical for addressing the major social determinants of health. For many human beings, it is good governance that makes the difference between life and death – it provides access to education, health care, social protection, the rule of law and participation in the economy. It is from this understanding that policy concepts such as health in all policies and investment for health, approaches such as health in the settings of everyday life, and instruments such as health impact statements have been developed.

Based on these experiences, the healthy3 initiative wants to take health promotion concepts and strategies one step further by exploring three questions:

> 1. How can joint policy goals be developed so that health promotion can contribute to addressing major challenges facing humankind such as food, water, fuel, changing consumption patterns, climate change and the environment?
> 2. Through which strategies can a high level of complementarity and integration be achieved between health and the environmental, economic and social impacts?
> 3. What conceptual framing and common language can help move a shared agenda forward?.............."

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