National food security strategy must link food, nutrition and health

Dietitians Australia is welcoming the Australian Government's commitment to taking a comprehensive approach to addressing food insecurity, following confirmation that the *Feeding Australia Strategy* will adopt the internationally recognised definition of food security.

Consultation and co-design workshops for *Feeding Australia: A National Food Security Strategy* are now underway, bringing together stakeholders from across the food, agriculture, health and community sectors to help shape a sustainable, resilient and secure food system that works for all Australians from producers through to consumers.

Dietitians Australia Chief Executive Officer Magriet Raxworthy said the commitment from Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Julie Collins MP to adopt the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) definition of food security as part of work in Australia was a significant and positive step forward.

"Dietitians Australia and our colleagues across the public health community have been advocating strongly for a comprehensive and holistic approach to food security," Ms Raxworthy said.

"The FAO definition recognises that food security extends beyond food production and supply to encompass six interconnected pillars: availability, access, utilisation, stability, agency and sustainability.

"It is critical that these six pillars are embedded not only in the development of the strategy, but are clearly cemented in the implementation plan.

“Food security is about far more than the amount of food we produce and how we transport it around the country.

“It is about whether people can access safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food, whether our food systems are sustainable, and whether communities have the agency to shape their own food environments.

Dietitians Australia said ensuring a safe, nutritious and accessible food supply is one of the most significant public health and policy challenges facing Australia.

“We cannot separate the health of our food system from the health of Australians,” Ms Raxworthy said.

“Food, nutrition and health are deeply interconnected.

“Food systems shape nutritional outcomes, nutrition shapes health, and our health system ultimately depends on both.

While adopting the FAO definition represents a strong foundation for tackling Australia’s food security challenges, Dietitians Australia says further work is needed to ensure nutrition security is embedded across Australia’s broader policy landscape.

“This work must be supported by a coordinated national approach to nutrition policy,” Ms Raxworthy said.

“That includes strengthening the regulatory approaches within our food environment, advancing public health nutrition policies to prevent chronic disease, widely promoting the new Australian Dietary Guidelines, and ensuring robust population nutrition monitoring systems are in place.

“Food security, nutrition security and health security are closely linked, and siloed policy responses will fall short of addressing the real challenges Australians face.

“We look forward to working closely with Minister Collins, Minister Butler and Assistant Minister White across their portfolios to ensure Australia’s nutrition policy and action are strong, coordinated and future focused.

For interviews with Dietitians Australia Chief Executive Officer Magriet Raxworthy, please contact Media Manager Amy Phillips on 0409 661 920.