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**NUTRITION MONTH APPEALS FOR AFFORDABLE HEALTHY DIETS**

TAGUIG CITY – The National Nutrition Council (NNC) leads the nationwide celebration of the 2023 Nutrition Month in July, guided by the theme **“Healthy diet gawing affordable for all.”**The campaign calls for shared actions from various stakeholders in the public and private sectors to empower Filipinos to have greater access to affordable, safe, and nutritious food.

Surveys have shown that a significant portion of the Filipino population is struggling to have a healthy diet. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported that about 75.2 million Filipinos could not afford a healthy diet in 2020. Globally, the average cost of a healthy diet is USD 3.54 per person per day. Since 2017, the cost of a healthy diet consistently increased from Php226.60 (USD 3.84), Php236.04 (USD 4.00) in 2018, Php238.9 (USD 4.05) in 2019, and Php242.53 (USD 4.11) in 2020. Due to food prices surge, conflicts, and climate change, the cost of a healthy diet is predicted to continue to rise for the next years.

In 2021, the Philippine Statistics Authority reported that an average Filipino family of five needs to have an income of Php12,082 per month to meet their minimum basic food and non-food needs. If the cost of a healthy diet is Php242.53/person per day, a household with five members shall have a total budget of Php1,212.650/day just to have healthy meals. This may be higher for families with infants, teenagers, and pregnant as their energy and nutrient requirements are higher compared to normal adults.

Food security is an important aspect of a healthy diet as it indicates people’s capacity to access sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and satisfy their food preferences. When households become food insecure, the risk to malnutrition becomes higher.

The 2021 Expanded National Nutrition Survey reported that 3 out of 10 households experienced moderate and severe food insecurity.

Food security is affected by uneven food prices, insufficient income, food access, and unemployment. These factors can be improved through strong collaboration between various stakeholders and scaled-up nutrition and related interventions. Thus, the 2023 Nutrition Month is an opportunity to provide a platform for collaboration and strengthened coordination between national government agencies, non-government organizations, development partners, academe, youth organizations, and civic organizations in scaling up interventions on food and nutrition. Anchored on the Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition (PPAN), this year’s campaign intends to contribute to the achievement of the Philippine Development Plan’s goals and targets on ensuring food security and proper nutrition through production and effective supply management.

This year’s campaign aims to achieve the following objectives: 1) engage consumers to support improvements in levels of diet quality towards sustainable healthy diets; 2) generate participation of stakeholders at various levels on actions towards enabling access to affordable, sustainable healthy diets; and 3) call support for the Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition 2023-2028 as the framework for action to improve nutrition security.

"Nutrition and food security issues in the country are very alarming and demands immediate intervention from all sectors. As we respond to these issues, we are guided by evidence-based interventions from the Philippine Plan of Action on Nutrition 2023-2028 aligned with the goals and targets of Philippine Development Plan. The PPAN 2023-2028 will be our compass, guiding us towards a future where nutrition security across all life stage is a reality for all" said NNC Executive Director IV and Assistant Secretary Azucena M. Dayanghirang.

As the country celebrates the annual Nutrition Month campaign, the NNC encourages every individual, families, and communities to support the campaign by 1) exclusively breastfeeding infants under 6 months of age and continue breastfeeding for up to two years and beyond with appropriate complementary feeding; 2) consuming fresh foods and limit those processed foods in your diets; 3) having family and community food gardens for an additional source of food; and 4) supporting our local farmers by buying produce from them.

The month-long celebration includes various activities led by the NNC Secretariat. The national launch will be held on 3 July in Tagum City, Davao del Norte; a Nutrition Month Conference on 26 July; and a culminating activity on 31 July which will be dovetailed with the National Launch of the PPAN 2023-2028.

NNC calls for all its stakeholders to support the campaign through policy issuance, dissemination of key messages, attendance to NNC-led activities, the conduct of fora and webinars on a healthy diet and aligning investment plans and action plans with the new PPAN for LGUs. Presidential Decree 491 in 1974 declared July as Nutrition Month.

For more information about the 2023 Nutrition Month, visit the National Nutrition Council website (www.nnc.gov.ph) and Facebook page.

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