The issue of food nutrition and security is an important one inextricably linked to the high prevalence of NCDs in the region - with circumstances of the pandemic and its aftermath threatening to undermine the gains made in recent years in prevention and control of diet-related NCDs, as well as the maintenance of good health among people living with NCDs.

Several specific recommendations were made in the statement, including the inclusion by governments of chronic and colorectal food and nutrition security measures in their national COVID-19 response plans, as well as a focus on emergency food assistance and social protection programmes, and support for home or backyard gardening in the context of the broader regional and national food-security strategy.

The statement called on governments and the private sector to support smallholder farmers, fisherfolk, and fisheries to increase their productivity and market the food they produce; request governments and the private sector to invest in healthy, resilient, sustainable regional food systems across the supply chain, including addressing intra-regional trade; reminded the international and regional health agencies of the need to sustain their support and guidance on the implementation of policies and programmes that ensure access to healthy, nutritious foods and the strengthening of food security in the region; and highlighted the identification and management of conflicts of interest in interactions with the private sector as part of food governance.

The COVID-19 pandemic represents an opportunity for a paradigm shift in the Caribbean in the way we produce and consume healthy food. It presents an opportunity for a regional approach to achieving the goal of maximum food security and nutrition, and raising awareness about the importance of food security in the region; and highlighted the identification and management of conflicts of interest in interactions with the private sector as part of food governance.