

Bridging agriculture and health through nutrition

Background

Agriculture is the primary source of livelihood for the majority of the world's poor who in turn are most vulnerable to ill-health. Agriculture supports health by providing food, fiber, medicinal plants, and materials for shelter for the world's population; among rural communities, it contributes to livelihoods and food security, and provides income which can be spent on health care and prevention. Successful health policies, practices, and care in turn benefit agriculture by protecting the labor force from days (and income) lost to illness, chronic disabilities or mortality. Success in both agriculture and health are crucial to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

Yet, despite the growing importance of such linkages, these two sectors rarely communicate with each other, and seldom are their activities integrated or coordinated. Agricultural policies address natural resource management, farmers' livelihoods, food security, and food safety – while public health policies tend to revolve around the provision of preventative and curative care within clinic-based health systems. Agriculture is driven by an economic development rationale, while health aims to maximize human development. These fundamentally different societal functions have kept the sectors apart.

As we head toward the second decade of the 21st century, bridges between the agriculture and health sector divide are needed. Given its pivotal role as both an outcome and input of successful agriculture and health policies and programs, **nutrition** can provide the common ground where these sectors meet -- the essential interface that enables long-term links to be forged and mutual benefits to be realized. Nutrition is at the core of interactions between food and health and it is fundamentally important for interventions that seek to ensure food and health security.

Objectives of the mini-symposium

This mini-symposium will highlight these key linkages, both conceptually and practically. It will focus on major challenges where nutrition plays a key role in responding to environment and health shocks and stresses – including HIV/AIDS, avian influenza and other zoonotic diseases. The panel will highlight the importance of nutrition at macro-level interactions, including globalization and trade. And it will show practically how nutrition-relevant interventions can be designed to capture the positive linkages and generate sustainable improvements in people's livelihoods and health status.

Session Topics and Speakers

Topic 1: *The pivotal importance of nutrition for agriculture and health: an overview*

Speaker: Stuart Gillespie, Senior Research Fellow, IFPRI and Director, Regional Network on AIDS, Livelihoods and Food Security (RENEWAL),

Topic 2: *HIV and nutrition: building sustainable responses*

Speaker: Frances Babiye, Programme Officer, Food and Sustainable Livelihoods with the AIDS Support Organization (TASO), Uganda

Topic 3: *Zoonotic disease and nutrition: avian influenza impacts on nutrition in Indonesia*

Speaker: Lora Iannotti, Post-doctoral Research Fellow, IFPRI

Topic 4: *Dietary quality and small scale food production: preventing micronutrient deficiencies through homestead food production*

Speaker: Aminuzzaman Talukder, Country Director, Helen Keller International, Cambodia and Regional Food Security Advisor, HKI Asia-Pacific Regional Office, Cambodia

Topic 5: *Globalization of food markets and nutrition*

Speaker: Corinna Hawkes, Consultant, France

Short Sessions