



Leveraging AGRICULTURE for Improving NUTRITION and HEALTH
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Youth Writing Contest
Renewing Agriculture for Better Food and Better Health

Fact Sheet

1. There has been huge progress in reducing deaths among children under age 5 worldwide since the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted by nearly 200 countries in 2000. Nonetheless, 8.8 million children each year die before their fifth birthday. Undernutrition contributes to more than 1 in 3 child deaths.
2. World agriculture produces 17 percent more calories per person today than it did 30 years ago, despite a 70 percent population increase. This is enough to provide everyone in the world with enough calories, but not necessarily enough nutrients. The world population is expected to grow to 9.1 billion people by 2050, so more food with more nutrients is needed.
3. Often low-cost foods have a lot of calories, but they do not have enough vitamins and minerals to keep people healthy. This means that poor people who rely on low-cost foods are either overweight or underweight—and almost always malnourished.
4. Children who are undernourished are much more likely to suffer from serious infections and to die from common illnesses such as diarrhea, measles, pneumonia, malaria, and HIV/AIDS.
5. Stunting occurs when children cannot grow fully because they don't have enough food and nutrition when they are young. Even though the share of children who are stunted in low-income countries has fallen from 40 to 29 percent in the past 20 years, 195 million children under 5 years old are still stunted. More than 90 percent of these children live in Asia and Africa.
6. Industrial agriculture and modern farming are dangerous occupations. Farmers deal with heavy machinery and toxic fertilizers and pesticides. In the United States, for example, farming is the fourth most dangerous occupation in the country.
7. The Western diet—often consisting of high-calorie, high-fat, low-nutrient foods—has spread around the world. As a result, some low-income countries are now experiencing not only high rates of stunting, but also high rates of overweight and obesity.
8. A child's future health begins before birth and depends on how healthy the mother is when she is pregnant. When an undernourished or overweight woman has a child, her child will likely be undernourished or overweight too. Then when the child grows up, he or she will continue the cycle of poor nutrition in the next generation.
9. Industrial agriculture requires concentrated amounts of fertilizers and chemicals and often generates large amounts of animal waste. These products can contaminate air and groundwater and degrade the environment if they are not handled properly.
10. More than 1 billion people in developing countries have inadequate access to water. Water is a limited resource on the planet and many farmers do not have irrigation technology that allows them to grow as much food as is possible with their land.
11. In our globalized food system, food travels all over the world and undergoes a great deal of processing. Food has many chances to become contaminated, which can cause countrywide or worldwide outbreaks of food-borne illness.
12. Climate change is a current and future cause of hunger and poverty. Increasing drought and flooding and changing climate patterns require changes in crops and farming practices, but poor countries may not have the resources or know-how to make these changes.