



Rapporteur Note

Session: Addressing Agriculture-Associated Diseases

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Chair: **Suwit Wibulpolprasert**, Senior Advisor on Disease Control
Ministry of Public Health, Thailand

Overview: **John McDermott**, Deputy Director General of Research
International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Kenya

Panelists:

Environment: **Dominique Charron**, Program Leader, Ecosystems and Human Health Program,
International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada

Public Health: **K. Srinath Reddy**, President
Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), India

Policy: Kabba Joiner, Former Director,
West African Health Organization (WAHO), Burkina Faso

Discussions/recommendations focused on three key areas

1. Establishing inter/intra sector linkages
2. Evidences based learning
3. Trainings/involvement of communities & stakeholders at the grassroots.

Linkages

- While it is important to have linkages between the agriculture, health and nutrition sectors—there is also a need to establish linkages with other sectors especially, environment, due to its implications to holistic development.
- Mandate policy makers and implementers to work together.
- Set clear guidelines and time lines for setting up such inter-ministerial working groups.
- Forecasting and evaluation—need for a multisectoral approach to forecast and evaluate impact of multisectoral linkages and working together. Such impact assessments should be built as a parallel process rather than in a sequential manner, coming at the end. This will help us draw lessons and learn, as we move forward.
- Need for Linkages not just between the sectors but also with the individual sectors. For example, synergies between the groups working on molecular biology, genomics, surveillance, social and economic aspects etc.

Evidence based Learning

- Experimental and evidential learning—learning from existing evidences (of what works and what does not) and also experimenting and creating new models/evidences of multisectoral/multistakeholder approach.
- Such lessons should be analysed, documented and communicated effectively.
- Some of the case studies discussed at the panel-

West Africa (WA) health organisation projects—A multi-sartorial project in WA, involving a large pool of extension workers and community level stakeholders. More information on the project and partners involved can be found on the following website.

www.westafricanhealth.org

National Rural Health Mission (India)—a multidisciplinary project implemented at sub district level.

www.mohfw.nic.in/national_rural_health_mission.htm

IDRC’s malaria control project in Peru

A project where teams from different disciplines, especially agriculture and health, came together to modify the rice irrigation practice which had positive implications on control of mosquitoes and thereby the number of malaria cases.

Climate change and tobacco control campaign were mentioned as global examples of transdisciplinary approach between sectors, regions and strategies.

Some ‘negative’ case studies, like the Avian Influenza management in Egypt was discussed, where limited linkages/communication between the agriculture and health sectors made it difficult to diagnose the problem until it was diagnosed in human.

Discussion on taxation of agro produces that are proven to be un-healthy or cause health risks (e.g., highly fatty food)

Would taxing unhealthy agro produce help in reducing it’s consumption?
Has this approach worked for tobacco control?

Key points that came out of this discussion were:

- The advantage of taxation and increasing the cost of tobacco on its consumption pattern – Several economists and international agencies ranging from WHO to World Bank agree and advocate that tobacco taxation raises prices and has been shown to reduce consumption. When taxation is efficiently used to raise prices of all tobacco products, it has worked to reduce consumption. However, when taxes are not raised on all types of tobacco products, such differential taxation may not drive down overall tobacco consumption”. To retain the present sentence would invite indignant and justified criticism from many quarters.
- For agro-produce, implementation of such taxation policies may be challenging.
- It is difficult to ‘generalise’ any assumptions for such approach. This has to be tailored in accordance to the situations in countries and communities.

Training and community involvement:

- Trainings across the sectors and stakeholders is imperative for establishing linkages and working together.
- A need to bring cognisance on multisectoral approach, among students, at a very young age before they get into sectoral silos.

Overall Conclusion

- Need for a paradigm shift for being able to work together.
- Collective and concrete action to start implementing the recommendations from this conference.