



Rapporteur Note

Session: Economic Levers

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Economic Levers to Promote Greater Agriculture and Nutrition and Health Linkage

The links among agriculture, health, and nutrition are most complex when we consider smallholder households, and all households, for that matter. Numerous pathways could be identified on how these linkages may take place, but not all these pathways could lead to good results. Policy makers (in all sectors) need to be cognizant of these multiple pathways and their bi-directional effects. Hence, the need to identify and design appropriate and effective levers to ensure that changes occurring in agriculture come about in a way that maximizes benefits to human health and nutrition while minimizing the risks.

It is argued that growth is good, but is not enough to improve nutrition. The country's economic structure and characteristics of its malnourished population determines which sectoral growth would be most effective (i.e., whether from agriculture, industry or services sector) to reduce under nutrition. Countries that are primarily dependent on agriculture would need the sector to grow fast to ensure the availability of sufficient food supply and provide sustainable sources of livelihood to raise incomes to access food and other basic necessities. There are a whole range of economic levers to effect sustainable growth in the agriculture sector. Key one include the sustained increases in agricultural investment: in research, development and extension of appropriate technologies to increase production of more nutritious food (biofortification, promotion of garden plots for women, product innovation like soya and millets; in improvement of postharvest and market facilities that reduce losses and facilitate the flow of goods; in other productivity increasing infrastructure facilities, etc. Another key economic lever is the creation of enabling policy environment that ensure favorable returns to production resources and other assets

especially among the poor and smallholder producers; e.g. appropriate price policy such as experienced in the development of the Amul Dairy industry.

Overall economic, and agricultural growth in particular, has not always been effective in reducing child malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies, however. Efforts to further improve agricultural and nonagricultural growth have to be accompanied by specific policy reforms, strategic investments and targeted programs to tackle under nutrition and child malnutrition. An example of a policy reform is the financial intervention on consumption of certain food items to influence people to eat healthier diets. A fat tax could reduce the use and consumption of such food and could generate funds for subsequent preventive campaigns. Another measure to help eradicate children malnutrition is the introduction of quality certification especially on infant foods. This can first be done on a randomized basis towards constructing the most cost-effective package for sustainable replication elsewhere, perhaps on a fee-for-service basis, with or without donor support to accelerate spread.

Other policy levers include: (1) investments in infrastructure (especially to expand drinking-water networks), health, and education; (2) programs provide birthing assistance and pre- and postnatal care to ensure healthier mother and baby; (3) education campaigns on child feeding practices (including breastfeeding), appropriate diets, proper hygiene, and disease and illness prevention and treatment; (4) child growth monitoring; (5) immunization campaigns; (6) nutrient-supplementation programs; and (7) programs that support dietary diversification by providing education on nutritious, well-balanced diets.

A more direct intervention that can be employed is the conditional cash transfer. This can provide the poor greater economic access.