



Rapporteur Note

Session: Perspectives from High-Income Countries (OECD)

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Chair: **Franz Heidhues**, Professor Emeritus,
University Stuttgart-Hohenheim, Germany

Panelists:

Linda Fulponi, Senior Agricultural Policy Analyst, Directorate for Trade and Agriculture,
Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), France

Brad Gilmour, Chief, International Analysis,
Agriculture and Agri-Food, Canada

D. Patrick Johnson, Associate, Diplomacy and International Development,
Booz Allen Hamilton, USA

Eileen Kennedy, Dean, Gerald J. and Dorothy R. Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy,
Tufts University, USA

The discussion about high-income countries leveraging agriculture for nutrition and health fell into four main areas.

First, we considered the contradictions implicit in, and the negative impacts of, agricultural policies in the U.S. and Europe. Linda Fulponi pointed out that adequate food supplies are not synonymous with adequate nutrition and good health, and that policies that support producers of meat, sugar, and tobacco tend to run counter to the promotion of good health. D. Patrick Johnson explained that governments tend to adopt policies that maximize the export value of crops and enable low food prices at home. In the United States, for example, the pursuit of a “cheap food” policy under President Nixon brought unexpected consequences: The percentage of income spent on food fell by nearly 50%, while the amount spent on healthcare more than tripled. Much of the increase is tied to dietary disease. When it comes to the developing world, panelists agreed, care must be taken to ensure that agricultural policies align with national objectives and are tied to health, nutritional, environmental, economic, developmental, and political goals.

The panel also considered disease trends in the developing world. Eileen Kennedy pointed out that while the concept of agriculture-nutrition linkages is nothing new, the global face of nutrition has changed: We now have problems of under-nutrition existing side by side with problems of obesity and chronic diseases. According to the WHO, the greatest number of cases of diabetes II and cardiovascular diseases are to occur in developing countries, largely as a consequence of their transition to a western diet and lifestyle. In setting agriculture-nutrition-health policy moving forward, Linda stressed the importance of ensuring that income growth doesn't result in calories from nutrient-rich foods, grains, and vegetables being replaced

with foods high in fat and sugar. It is crucial to think about nutrition policies now, because once obesity sets in it is almost impossible to reverse.

Brad Gilmour spoke about vulnerability and mitigating risks in agriculture. Key to doing this is getting diagnostics right; establishing priorities and remedies based on the likelihood and severity of prospective shocks like water scarcity, disease, and soil degradation; reducing vulnerability and building resilience into agri-food eco-systems and value-chains; and avoiding the creation of “gatekeepers” and bottlenecks. The design and delivery of remedial measures is paramount, he said, as ill-conceived “prescriptions” can do more harm than good. He pointed out the importance of differentiating between causes and drivers, and symptoms and consequences of shocks and stresses, and the panel considered measures to hedge against the volatility of markets, warning against policies like export restrictions, which can spread like disease and result in extremely high costs.

Finally, the participants discussed the need for policy coherence across the health, nutrition, and agricultural sectors to avoid the more deleterious health outcomes apparent in the high-income countries. Unfortunately, few examples exist of cost-effective country-wide approaches to decreasing overweight and obesity. Educational programs directed to nutrition and health in schools and communities can build awareness but must also take into consideration the psychology of consumers and the difficulty of changing their behaviors. In conclusion, the panel agreed that the direction of agricultural policy is not as focused on health and nutrition as it could be, and that moving forward it will be critical to collaborate across institutions to define integrated policies and develop holistic approaches to addressing the health and nutrition problems in both high- and low-income countries.