



Speaker Summary Note

Session: Enhancing Nutrition Along the Value Chain

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Title: **From Field to Fork:
The whole value chain**

Agriculture and nutrition have traditionally operated in their individual area of expertise not considering the potential and limitations of the other in meeting “at risk” population needs for nutritious foods in sufficient quantity. International training programs in agriculture and nutrition have perpetuated this division. The goal of agriculture and of nutrition should be to achieve a healthy population. The malnutrition problems now affecting a vast number of people, mainly poor women and children, will not be solved if this isolationism is allowed to continue. Using a whole value chain approach—from field to fork—holds much promise for breaking down specialty barriers. In addition, the approach can identify other sectors that should be included to maximize economic, nutrition and health benefit for vulnerable producers and consumers.

What are some considerations for reaching nutrition and health goal using a value chain approach?

First: Programs within universities that are preparing the next generation of agriculturalists and nutritionists should include value chain concepts/approaches, along with other alternatives, for reaching nutrition and health goals. Students of international agricultural development and international nutrition programs need to sit and problem solve various agricultural/nutrition situations together. Only then will the needed respect for the contributions and constraints of the other’s discipline be developed and lead to respectful and coordinated activities in future agriculture and nutrition development programs.

Second: Some agricultural development programs already use value chain approaches to identify problems and seek solutions to supply and demand from field to markets; it would take little more to expand the chain to include nutrition goals, i.e. from markets to forks. These extended links in the chain could then identify how value-adding actions within the consumer’s home could increase and/or retain nutrients as the food is stored, prepared and consumed. Furthermore, the approach could identify meal patterns to maximize micro nutrient bioavailability from the whole family diet, e.g. the negative effects of phytate in cereal grains on iron and zinc absorption that can be counter balanced in part by including ascorbic acid containing foods at the same meal.

Third: The lack of clear nutrition goals and documentation of nutrition and health impact is a current weakness in most programs that have used a value chain approach. This deficiency should be corrected in the value chain analysis of future agricultural/nutrition programs to validate the benefits accrued using a value chain approach.

Fourth: A value chain approach lends itself to gender considerations, particularly because women make up the majority of small farm holders in developing economies and also are responsible for providing the family meals. Local and international NGOs are the usual program implementers at the community level. They could be trained in using value chain approaches, for example, while working with local women's agricultural alliances to identify context specific hurdles to value additions—economic and nutritional—along the entire chain from field-to markets-to forks, including benefits to consumers for themselves, their children and other family members.

The above are only a few general considerations for using a whole value chain approach to meeting the nutritional and health concerns of malnourished populations.