



Speaker Summary Note

Session: High-Income Countries

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Title: Reflections on Leveraging Agriculture to Promote Nutrition and Health

Understanding linkages between agriculture-food-diet and health

- How do the links between agriculture and nutrition/health operate? To set attainable objectives and frame policies it is crucial to understand their functioning in some detail. What do we know? what do we need to know?
- Adequate or abundant food supplies are not synonymous to adequate nutrition and good health. Incentives to production are fairly well known but not those for food choices. The link between agriculture—food—diet means understanding consumers' consumption behaviours.
- Traditional agricultural policies in OECD countries have focussed on ensuring adequate incomes for farmers as well as food supplies within a context of technological change that has increased agricultural productivity and driven down real food prices. Direct and indirect support policies to agricultural producers of specific products such as dairy/meat/sugar/cereals/tobacco manifest little concern for their health or nutrition consequences of their consumption. In fact agricultural and health policies can be seen to often conflict.
- Food industry, transforming agricultural products into food, is an important part of the equation linking food/diet to nutrition/health, but nutrition and health have not always the priority.
- Globalization of the food system has opened up access to greater variety of food at low cost ? But have the choices improved nutrition and health better for nutrition?

Setting agriculture-health policy priorities: present and future

- Where poverty is the root of the malnutrition/hunger, then poverty which is itself a result of underdevelopment needs to be tackled. This requires multi-sector/multi task approach. Yet there are few solutions in sight, because we still know little on why some develop/grow and others not. More needs to be known on the cause of poverty/hunger/malnutrition of specific situations/regions so as to design better policies/approaches and target specific communities/regions/areas.
- Income growth should have a positive impact on malnutrition and hunger, if calories from nutrient rich foods, grains and vegetables are NOT replaced with foods high in fat and sugar.

- Food markets are now global and as incomes rise these countries draw investment by food industries supplying the 'western' diet the result of which is the generation of foods habits with unintentional consequences of overweight and obesity.
- Many countries face combating rising obesity in urban areas and hunger/malnutrition in rural areas. According to FAO, the nutrition transition is also happening in the rural areas as rural farmers give up mixed cropping for a single cash crops and the income used for food
- Policy coherence across health and agricultural sectors is required to avoid the more deleterious health/nutrition outcomes of OECD countries. Cross sector cooperation in policy formulation essential: at local/regional and national levels. Promotion of agricultural production needs to be done with a view to nutrition and health in short and long run:
- Policies need to be coherent across sectors, targeted and time-limited both on the production and consumption side. Monitoring outcomes and maintaining flexibility—to switch roads and objectives when needed is essential.

Double challenge for developing countries eliminating hunger and malnutrition and battling the trend in overweight and obesity