



## Speaker Summary Note

**Session:** High-Income Countries

**Eileen Kennedy**

**Speaker:** Dean, Gerald J. and Dorothy R. Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy  
Tufts University, USA

- The entire concept of agriculture-nutrition linkages is not new. Indeed, research conducted in the early 1980s at IFPRI contributed significantly to our knowledge and debate surrounding the potential of the agriculture sector linked to the health sector as a way to improve nutritional status. The International Conference on Nutrition convened in 1992 by FAO and WHO also had a significant focus on agriculture nutrition links.
- Success stories on approaches linking agriculture/nutrition as a way to significantly enhance nutritional status are not as plentiful as many policy makers would hope.
- This conference provides us the opportunity to revisit leveraging agriculture and health as a way to achieve quantum leaps in improved nutritional status.
- The challenges are different than in the 1980s. The Global Face of Nutrition has changed; we now have the double burden of disease—problems of under nutrition existing side by side with problems of diet/chronic diseases. The ink was not even dry on the Millennium Development Goals, when it was clear that in some of the poorest countries of the world overweight and obesity and diet related chronic diseases are increasing at an exponential rate.
- The challenge is to articulate what combinations of policies and programs are needed to address the double burden of disease.
- Some significant efforts have already been launched with the political commitment to different paradigms for dealing with this Global Face of Nutrition. These include among other: Scaling Up Nutrition, Feed the Future as just two examples.
- While these efforts are focused on under nutrition in the pregnancy and preschool period, some elements of these initiatives are salient when we look at how to deal with the double burden of disease.
- A major obstacle to success in reducing diet related chronic diseases is the nearly complete lack of data on “delivery science”—that is the “how” to implement policies and programs, not simply the what. So for example, there are no examples of country-wide approaches to decreasing overweight and obesity that have been shown to be cost effective.
- Unlike some of the interventions with proven effectiveness—breastfeeding, micro-nutrients interventions—the preliminary evidence suggests that prevention of overweight and obesity will require much more multi-sectoral approaches.

- At agreed to at the 2000 National Nutrition Summit in the U.S. opened by then President Bill Clinton, food security is the foundation of good nutrition. Thus food security strategies that ensure access to nutritious foods is essential to addressing the global nutrition problems.
- Increasingly populations, including low income populations are getting their food from the commercial sector. Therefore there should be a serious conversation about models of effective public-private sector partnerships that can be used to improve overall diet. What types of product formulation and reformulations are necessary in order to more effectively achieve improved diet quality?
- Capacity development at all levels is essential in order to identify newer paradigms for improving nutritional status. This capacity development needs to include human capacity, institutional capacity, political capacity and advocacy capacity. The public health community needs to identify innovative methods for quickly improving these capacities at all levels.
- It is unlikely that a “one size fits all” approach will be effective. Therefore there needs to be serious discussions about how to tailor policies and programs with demonstrated effectiveness to different geographical and economic environments.
- While a lot has been learned about essential actions for nutrition, there are many more gaps in our understanding of essential actions to link agriculture to nutrition to health. The OECD countries could make a major contribution by identifying strategies that can potentially be modified or adapted to other national environments.
- Some say the problems of food insecurity and diet/chronic diseases are daunting. There is now a window of opportunity to achieve success in improving nutritional status globally if we can engage in innovative research and newer partnerships involving the public/private sector.