

Summary: Nutritional Deficiencies as Driver for Agriculture Value Chain Development:

Lessons from the Field

Critical Issues

1. Compartmental approaches where agriculture and nutrition operate without genuine joint ownership of the food and nutrition security challenge have had limited impact.
2. A new way of thinking and communicating is therefore needed for multisectoral programs intended to improve household level food security.
3. The nutrition-enhancing agriculture value chain approach which responds directly to the demand for specific nutrients, is a central driver for this change.
 - a. The nutrition community of practice will begin to view value chains not as yet another approach to be incorporated in the design of projects and programs, but learn to embrace it as a tool which – when used strategically – can contribute to successfully address specific dietary issues communities are confronted with.
 - b. The agriculture community of practice will begin to expand their vision of the value chain approach and build on the idea that nutritional deficiencies can be seen as opportunities for value chain development or growth within market systems

The new thinking means building sustainability into interventions from day one by leveraging agricultural supply chains which are already in place. The good news is that fresh/ processed food markets operate globally from out of people's homes to roadside stands to large wholesale markets. Nutrition-enhancing agricultural value chain approaches build on these existing systems of supply/demand. Using the concept of nutrition deficiencies as driver for value chain development the following is crucial in designing interventions:

- c. Availability of nutrition data: Identification of specific dietary gaps (Which nutrients are missing? Who are the people affected? When do these gaps occur? Why?) Provides essential information for crafting location specific messages designed to increase demand for traditionally grown foods in order to close the identified consumption gaps.
- d. Agriculture, using the value chain framework, supplies the crops in demand to the market.
4. A word about “value”. There is an immediate need to build skills by holding food security “practitioner academies “in communities being served, especially for agriculture and nutrition decision makers of all levels, so that they walk the fields together and understand that each crop grown is part of a farm and community food system essential for survival and that “value” for the vulnerable means multiple value providing multiple functions well beyond a single economic or nutritional value which is often the main focus of interventions.

Policy Recommendations and Investment Priorities

The challenge for most governments with large food insecure populations is, on the one hand, to be expected to grow the agricultural sector where a sizable portion of the population live and work; on the other hand they have to manage serious diet-related health problems which create huge costs for public health systems. So how can governments create a win-win policy for both agricultural growth while at the same time addressing health issues related to specific dietary deficiencies? How can governments address issues of availability, access, utilization, and resilience at the same time and in a mutually supportive manner?

Recognizing that the marketplace, from informal village kiosks to formal large wholesale centers, can be used as a tool for boosting availability, access/affordability and utilization as well as resilience and serves as one nexus point for food security, the current food security framework needs to be expanded to include the theme of nutritional deficiencies as driver for value chain development. This opens up policy opportunities for advancing formal and informal food market systems at a variety of intervention levels in new and strategic ways. Once the communities of research, education, and practice are aligned with this perspective it will enable nutrition improvement through agricultural value chains to move toward becoming sustainable.

The following are suggestions for discussion:

- 1) United Nations System: UN REACH (Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger and Undernutrition) with its mandate and strategy of coordinated action of UN agencies, civil society, donors, and the private sector, under the leadership of national governments; offers a unique platform to pilot nutrition as a driver for agricultural value chain development. To start with, the stakeholders brought together by REACH select a few priority crops to start the process and then identify their specific role in adding resilience and value to those crops through increased utilization, access/affordability, and or availability.
- 2) Policies which identify and promote groups of or individual high “value” nutritious crops will have beneficial revenue implications. Using nutritional deficiencies as a driver for value chain development should result in health care savings: Not only does the expansion of nutritious in-demand agriculture crops that are deemed high “value” economically generate income; they address specific dietary gaps and can