

**DISCUSSION TOPIC**  
**NUTRITION EDUCATION – ESSENTIAL BUT OFTEN NEGLECTED**

Greetings,

My name is Jane Sherman and I act as an education consultant in diverse fields, which include nutrition education. This last has brought me into contact with FAO, where I have been involved in the production of the Nutrition Education Curriculum Planning Guide and in other activities of the FAO programme which seeks to integrate nutrition education, home gardening and school gardens in the context of food security.

**Nutrition awareness** is surely **vital to informing decision-making** at every level from individual food choices through family food planning, crop choices, the advice of extension workers, and school curricula, up to Ministry of Agriculture initiatives and government food security policy; and is one of the most sustainable drivers of food security. My personal contacts with these sectors suggest that there is a widespread absence of such awareness, even among the well-educated, in both the developed and the developing world. Nutrition education theory, research, projects, policies and strategies have developed over several decades in the United States and Europe and have attracted recent attention because of the emerging issue of obesity. But judging by the resources displayed on this site, and by an analysis of the projects described on the Partnership for Child Development Schools and Health data base ([www.schoolsandhealth.org](http://www.schoolsandhealth.org)), **nutrition education in the developing world gets little coverage in publications, research and projects**, which tend to concentrate on food aid or food supplementation.

My questions are:

- Ø Does this impression correspond to others' experience and insights?
- Ø Can Forum members **substantiate** this impression by **REFERENCE to gaps in policies, programmes, projects or research**, or suggest how it could be substantiated?
- Ø If this impression is justified, can you suggest **REASONS for this NEGLECT?**
- Ø Can you suggest **STRATEGIES** for raising the profile of nutrition education and awareness in all concerned sectors?

Having no institutional status, I cannot promise to take direct action, but I will gladly pass on advice and insights.

Many thanks for your feedbacks,

Jane Sherman, education consultant, Italy

**INTRODUCTION FROM THE FACILITATOR**

Dear FSN Forum members,

My name is Ellen Muehlhoff, I am nutritionist and have worked in FAO's Food and Nutrition Division (since 2006: Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division) for nearly 18 years. My work focuses on Food and Nutrition Education and Consumer Awareness. I will serve as the

facilitator of this discussion topic. Welcome to this Forum and I look forward to our interactions during the next few weeks!

As most of you will be aware, FAO's constitutional mandate includes ensuring adequate nutrition, empowering producers and consumers, disseminating nutrition information, improving education related to nutrition and spreading public knowledge of nutritional science and practice. Well-nourished, healthy individuals are better able to contribute to social and economic development. **Progress in reducing hunger and malnutrition**, achieving most of the Millennium Development Goals and the realization of the Right to Adequate Food, can be greatly accelerated by **effective nutrition information and education**.

**Knowledge of food and appropriate dietary practices** is a **prerequisite** for **improving access to and consumption of nutritionally adequate diets**, which is fundamental to **reducing all forms of malnutrition**. Nutrition education and consumer awareness are **essential** to ensure that a better and more **diversified food supply translates into adequate diets** for all groups.

Nutrition information and education are also indispensable for **integrating producer and consumer concerns along the food chain**. To address problems of undernutrition and alleviate the negative impact of changing dietary and lifestyle patterns on individual health and development, **appropriate policies and information and education strategies** are needed to enable all consumers to **access and select a range of nutritious and safe foods**, and to practice lifelong healthy eating habits.

Your views on this important topic and area of work, your insights, experiences and lessons learnt in advancing this area of work, as well as existing constraints and knowledge gaps would be appreciated.

Best to all,

Ellen

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