



## Innovations in agriculture to improve nutrition. Share your success stories

Discussion No. 115 from 18 May to 5 June 2015

The primary role of agriculture is to grow food for human consumption, and the agriculture sector has been largely successful in producing sufficient food to meet the energy (or calorie) needs of the rising global population. However the persistence of undernutrition, and food and nutrition insecurity in many parts of the world, especially sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, highlights that considerable progress is still required to ensure equitable access to a diversified and nutritious diet.

Agricultural policies have historically supported the production of key staple grains such as rice, maize and wheat. While these staple crops are good sources of dietary energy, they typically fail to provide sufficient micronutrients (vitamins and minerals), and therefore only form part of what is considered a nutritious diet. Recently there has been a significant effort to identify agricultural policies and practices that can improve both food and nutrition security.

Many interventions in agriculture have been designed to have an impact on nutrition outcomes. Home and community gardens, support for livestock and aquaculture, cash-cropping and cultivation of biofortified crops are some good examples. However, we are certain that beyond these well-known agricultural interventions, it is likely that there are many exciting, local and grassroot-led innovations in agriculture and livestock/fisheries production, which currently do not have the necessary evidence base of their impact on nutritional status that would justify their upscaling and broader implementation.

To learn more about such innovative approaches, [Leveraging Agriculture for Nutrition in South Asia \(LANSA\)](#) programme is engaged in cooperation with FAO's FSN Forum in running this online discussion.

LANSA is a multi-partner research effort led by the MS Swaminathan Research Foundation in Chennai, India. The focus of LANSA is to understand the role of agricultural policies and practices in improving nutrition in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. A key part of LANSA is the involvement of local partners to conduct research through a [competitive grant funding scheme](#), the second round of which will take place in July 2015.

**Goal of the consultation:** While we are aware of some agricultural innovations that may support nutrition outcomes we do not know them all! So the goal of this consultation is to ask for your input, based on your expert knowledge, to identify potential ideas of innovations in agriculture that could promote better nutrition of the population in the South Asian region. We specifically are looking for new interventions in agriculture that require formative research to aid their design, and/or research to understand their feasibility before being tested in large intervention studies. We also have an eye on the future and on the likely impact of environmental change on

agricultural production. Ideally, the consultation will provide a list of promising interventions in agriculture with a potential for upscaling and that could benefit from further support.

Based on your knowledge and experience (in agriculture, food systems, nutrition, or even just on time spent growing your own food), the questions for this consultation are:

1. Are you aware of an untested innovation in South Asian agriculture that has the potential to have a major impact on nutrition and health in the region?
2. Are you aware of a tested or untested innovation in Africa or other world region that could be introduced or adapted to the South Asian region and has the potential to improve nutrition outcomes in the South Asian context?
3. Among these innovations, are there any interventions in agriculture that might also help to reduce the likely impact of multiple environmental changes on agricultural production in South Asia?

These are challenging questions and we are looking forward to your views and opinions to help us define the priorities for this research call. We really hope that by using this consultative platform we will reach out and elicit responses from you whatever your background or expertise. We need innovative thinkers like you to solve some of the world's largest problems. And there is always the chance that your ideas will drive a whole new research agenda!

We are really looking forward to reading your responses. Thank you for your time and for sharing your knowledge and expertise!

Best wishes,

**Professor M S Swaminathan**  
Founder-Chairman MSSRF &  
LANSA Consortium Advisory Group  
Member

**Dr. Alan Dangour**  
Reader - LSHTM  
LANSA Pillar 3 Lead Researcher