



The contribution of the private sector and civil society to improve nutrition

Discussion No. 92 from 5 to 26 September 2013

As part of the preparations leading up to the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), a Preparatory Technical Meeting is to be held at FAO Headquarters from 13 to 15 November 2013. More information is available at:

www.fao.org/food/nutritional-policies-strategies/icn2/en

To feed into and inform this meeting, a series of online discussions are being held on selected thematic areas. This online discussion "**The contribution of the private sector and civil society to improve nutrition**" invites you to share evidence and exchange views on how the private sector and civil society can contribute to improving diets and raising levels of nutrition, particularly of the poorest and most nutritionally vulnerable, as well as ways to improve monitoring and evaluation.

For many of us, the ICN2 may be the only opportunity in our lifetime to focus world attention on nutrition and thereby reach agreement on what needs to be done to improve nutrition. If 'better access to better food and nutrition for more people' is an objective we can all agree upon, how can we achieve it and what is required individually and collectively from each sector?

It is clear the world must produce enough food in quantity and in quality in terms of variety, diversity, safety and nutrient content to feed a population of over 9 billion by 2050. How is this to be done sustainably and meet the zero hunger target? In the last FSN Forum discussions, it was agreed that to counter malnutrition we need nutrition-enhancing agriculture and food systems (www.fao.org/fsnforum/forum/discussions/nutrition-enhancing-agriculture) that provide diverse and healthy diets. The role of social safety nets (www.fao.org/fsnforum/forum/discussions/social-protection-and-nutrition) in protecting nutrition is also recognized as are direct measures targeted at reducing stunting and addressing acute malnutrition.

If we consider food and nutrition insecurity essentially as a problem of poverty, the strategy to counter this insecurity needs to be founded on inclusive broad based development and sustainable economic growth. Indeed the World Bank reminds us that investing in nutrition makes sense from an economic point of view as every dollar invested generates a return of up to \$US30 and FAO's report on [The State of Food and Agriculture 2013](#) estimates an annual cost of

malnutrition of \$US500 per person! Thus it is clear that economic development is fundamentally important in the combat against hunger and poverty.

Farmers, farmers' associations and farmers' cooperatives are key to feeding the world. Smallholder farmers as entrepreneurs that invest and innovate, are the basis for agricultural development that can effectively tackle poverty, hunger and malnutrition. The private sector therefore has a key role to play in developing sustainable agriculture and delivering nutrition for all people. As governments cannot feed people on a sustainable basis, they need to deal with structural conditions which constrain development while at the same time promote policies which will enable the the private sector to continue to innovate and invest in the food and agriculture sector. This includes supporting local business development.

Similarly, a thorough involvement of civil society organizations (including NGOs, social movements and community-based organizations), especially those representing the sectors of the population that are most vulnerable to hunger and malnutrition (among others: small food producers and landless farmers, agricultural workers, fishers and fish workers, pastoralists and herders, forest dwellers, ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples, women and youth), is key to ensure coordination, ownership, effectiveness and accountability of initiatives aimed at improving nutrition. A proactive effort to stimulate the participation of civil society representatives so as to have a balanced representation in terms of constituencies, type of organization, geographic distribution, gender and age is of crucial importance.

All sectors must work together for this common goal. Private companies, civil society, knowledge institutions and government (the golden quadrant) need to agree upon finding effective and efficient policies, sustainable practices and food solutions to reach the underserved consumer. At the same time agro-food solutions are required that provide foods which are nutritious, healthy and respond to consumer demand.

Three key actions are needed to result in 'better access of better food and nutrition for more people': 1. connect agriculture, food and nutrition at all levels; 2. invest in new ideas and delivery models; and 3. align agendas (including a One UN agenda on nutrition) and work together on the Zero Hunger Challenge . Make zero hunger a cross-sector objective and ensure the post-2015 MDG agenda includes nutrition security as an explicit part of food security and vice versa.

We invite you to focus your comments on this note as well as on the core [background and expert papers and materials for the ICN2](#) made available for this discussion and on the following four sets of questions:

- **Policy issues:** What role can the private sector and civil society play in designing and implementing policies that make agriculture and food systems more nutrition-enhancing? What are the knowledge gaps?
- **Programme issues:** What have been the success stories and lessons learned by the private sector and civil society in implementing nutrition-enhancing agriculture and food systems programmes at country level? How can the impact of such programmes on food consumption and nutrition be monitored?

- **Governance:** What are the changes needed to make sure that the private sector and civil society are involved in building effective and sustainable governance mechanisms related to agriculture, food systems and nutrition?
- **Partnerships:** What contribution can the private sector and civil society make for working across sectors and building strong linkages between food and agriculture, social protection, employment, health, education and other key sectors? How can the 'golden quadrant' be managed to create and scale up sustainable partnerships? What are examples of projects working jointly with the private sector, civil society, governments under a UN-wide initiative (like SUN, ZHC, etc...)?

The outcome of this online discussion will be used to enrich the discussions at the preparatory technical meeting on 13-15 November 2013 and thereby feed into and inform the main high level ICN2 event in 2014.

We thank you in advance for your time and for sharing your knowledge and experiences with us.

We look forward to your contributions.

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