

FAO Fruit and vegetable for health workshop
Enhancing Production and Consumption of Safe and High-Quality Fruits and
Vegetables
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Workshop discussion group 2 summary

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Mandate of the groups:

To elaborate elements of a guiding framework for action, policies, and strategy options at national levels, based on consideration of actual issues and problem encountered in the course of fruit and vegetables for health programs in different countries.

Theme of groups 2:

Developing interdisciplinary action plans as a basis for promoting and supporting increased fruit and vegetables production, availability and consumption.

1. Commonalities, and differences among country cases / Barriers to increased FAV consumption

At the consumer level:

- Cultural specificities with respect to the consumption of fruits and vegetables (FAV) are very in the different countries and the perceptions toward the consumption of FAV.
- FAV are associated with functional or sensory attributes, and therefore are only consumed during certain meals. For instance, in Malaysia, FAV are classified in four groups (Cold, Hot, Sharp, Windy) and will be consumed at certain time of the day (e.g. some fruits are considered “windy” and are therefore not consumed in the morning).
- In Korea, the majority of the FAV consumption is essentially coming from processed commodities (Kimchi) and raw FAV are not readily consumed.
- Some countries will mostly consume FAV only in the cooked form and resent eating them in the raw form.
- A country like Korea, which ranks among the highest in the world in terms of FAV consumption, is currently undergoing an important nutrition transition which jeopardize the already high FAV consumption. Initiatives should be promoted to preserve the

traditional lifestyle which, in a large proportion, makes place to FAV consumption. In this context, implementation of a traditional 5 a day programs would simply deter the country from its original good FAV trends and conduct to a reduction in overall consumption of FAV.

- Size of portions is poorly defined and might be varying considerably amongst the different Asian countries.

At the production level

- The need of the population in rural areas for earn a living leads to the sale of their entire domestic FAV production and consequently to a very low FAV consumption despite the fact that these commodities are readily available in quantity and quality.
- Rural population is hard to reach and there are no promotion at their level as to the benefit of FAV consumption.
- In many countries rural communities receive no monetary assistance to buy and consume more FAV.
- Rural population must have access to clean and safe commodities with no pesticides residues which is not the case at present.
- In some countries, supply of good quality FAV may not be sufficient and it will then be necessary to improve production and availability of these goods.

Public policies

- There is an urgent need to translate in simple terms the information on the health benefits of FAV consumption and adapt this information to the cultural background of people in the different countries.
- The nutrition messages should be coherent with increasing the consumption of FAV. For instance, some countries promote milk consumption instead of FAV.
- Due to their high nutritive properties, consumption of indigenous FAV should be promoted. Information of the place occupied by indigenous FAV in the diet should be obtained from the different countries.
- Surveillance (monitoring) programs should be implemented to provide feed-back on the efficacy of the governmental initiative to promote FAV consumption.

Distribution

- The quality of FAV varies considerably between the different Asian countries. For some, the quality is higher in the country than in the cities while for other, the quality is

better in the cities. Often, imported fruits are perceived as being better in terms of health quality.

- The price is the driving factor for consumption of FAV. In some countries, FAV are more expensive in cities than in rural communities essentially due to cheap imports from other countries. Overall, in most countries, the high price of FAV is a deterrent to higher consumption.
- The post-harvest quality of FAV must be improved in most countries to insure access to quality FAV in sufficient quantities.

2- Interventions (entry points) to address:

- Make sure to adapt regional FAV consumption programs to the cultural peculiarities of each country, that is, be culturally sensitive when implementing a program
- Evaluate the cost effectiveness of “5 a day” programs
- Any interventions should concentrate its action on rural, “non-bankable” populations since it is the most vulnerable to malnutrition
- Special attention should be paid to the bottom-up approach of Thailand which has already successfully implemented at the regional level the terms of the initiative discussed at the last Kyoto meeting organized by FAO meeting. This country has decided to aim at the group of the society most likely to implement the changes in the future, the children. This was achieved by creating educational programs in schools.
- Establish partnerships with health related professional associations to develop positive actions with respect to the consumption of FAV.
- Organizing press conference on sensitive topics may be an efficient tool to pressure the governments into action, particularly with respect to the consumption of FAV.
- FAV consumption messages should be harmonized with other nutrition messages and initiatives of countries. For instance, Thailand has a very successful program called “Healthy menu” in participating restaurants where the items on the menu are accompanied with a quote or precisions on its nutritive value, that is, information on the presence of reduced salt and MSG, information on the sugar content, etc. Establishing a similar quote system for the number of portion of FAV contained in a meal should be easy to implement and might be a powerful tool to promote an increased consumption of FAV.
- Promotion programs to stimulate the consumption of FAV should not be restrictive to their nutritional aspects only but should also aim at increasing the awareness of the targeted population to the health functionality of FAV.

- Governments should invest in the development of the human resources and institutional capacities to convey the message about increasing the consumption of FAV to the population and to translate this information in efficient and simple terms.
- Efforts should be made to bridge an apparent communication gap between the FAV production side and the health professionals and more precisely the nutritionists and medical doctors.
- In order to be successful, national programs promoting the consumption of FAV should be allocated substantial funding or else they will fail.

Stakeholders

- The ministry of health
- The ministry of education
- The ministry of rural development
- Professional associations dealing with health
- Regional and local government authorities
- Medias
- NGO's who must be taught on the importance of FAV to convey the message to the local populations
- Distribution food chains and supermarket who have the capacity to advertise and implement specific health promotion campaigns