



Improving nutrition through accountability, ownership and partnerships

Brussels Development Briefing No. 41

Brussels, 20 May 2015

On 20 May 2015, the CTA organised the 41st Brussels Development Briefing-part of a series of bi-monthly Policy Briefings on ACP- EU rural and agricultural issues. Around 150 participants gathered in Brussels to discuss how to improve nutrition through accountability, ownership and partnerships in ACP countries.

Improving nutrition through accountability, ownership and partnerships. This Briefing focused on several key issues: scale-up nutrition-specific interventions that concentrate on food, health, care, such as high-quality diets, preventive health care, treatment of severe acute malnutrition etc; the issue of policy coherence and the importance of a multi-sectoral approach to address underlying determinants of malnutrition: poverty, food insecurity, lack of gender equity, lack of education, lack of water and sanitation etc.; the role of governance in addressing nutrition, as well as the importance of the private sector and civil society organizations; the role of gender: empowering women; increasing the knowledge and evidence to maximize the impact of agriculture on nutrition; the coexistence of under and over nutrition in the same country, household and even individual.

Partners in the Briefing:

- CTA
- IFPRI-Led CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH)
- European Commission
- ACP Secretariat
- Concord

For more information on the Brussels Development Briefings visit

<https://www.brusselsbriefing.net>



Isolina Boto



Viwanou Gnassounou



Jean-Pierre Halkin

Isolina Boto, Manager of the CTA Brussels Office, set the scene and introduced the Briefing which is part of a series held every two months and co-organised by CTA, the European Commission/DG DEVCO, the ACP Group and Concord. For this particular topic, the IFPRI-Led CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH) joined as co-organiser. The topic of nutrition has been discussed in a previous Briefing with IFPRI in 2008 at the occasion of a major research conference held in India on the subject. Since then, the Briefings co-organised with IFPRI, on resilience, food price crisis and now revisiting the nutrition agenda through the lens of accountability and ownership all contribute to enhancing the linkages between agriculture and nutrition.

In his introductory remarks, **Viwanou Gnassounou, Assistant Secretary General of the ACP Group** began by emphasising the importance of the nutrition for all of us. In today's world it is unacceptable to have hundreds of millions of people who are undernourished or malnourished and yet this is a reality. People in ACP countries face a double burden: they are malnourished, but also over nourished. In the Pacific and

the Caribbean regions over half of the deaths are non communicable diseases related to nutritional issues. One important aspect that needs to be tackled is the issue of policy coherence. Improving nutrition has to be part of an integral approach that leads to wealth, to youth and women inclusion in the economic circuit. When addressing nutrition, social, educational, cultural and many other aspects need to be taken into account. For example, making schooling free and mandatory at the primary level implies the possibility to provide for children while they are at school. Therefore, tackling nutrition per se is not sufficient, issues such as resources, cultural practices, traditional practices need to be envisaged.

Jean-Pierre Halkin, Head of Unit, Rural Development, Food & Nutrition Security, EC underlined that speaking about nutrition nowadays implies 8 hundred million people still suffering from hunger. Different estimates reveal that 2 billion people are currently suffering from hunger and micronutrient deficiency. Among them, there are a hundred and sixty million children suffering from chronic undernutrition and 3 million of them are likely to die this year. Nonetheless, the ones that will survive have also a



John McDermott.



Michael Hailu



Marie Ruel

life sentence as they will not be able to completely develop physically and mentally, they will not attain their full potential. This issue is increasingly perceived as a question of social justice and social equity, one of the most prominent European values. The European Commission (EC) has been at the forefront in this area. It is also the only area where the EC has a commitment in terms of impact rather than in terms of money.

Acknowledging the challenge of nutrition is now achieved: The Hunger Summit, the N4G Summit, the ICN2 and the prominence that nutrition has in the SDG system. At the moment, particularly for the EU, the challenge is to respond to the expectations of partner countries and help them implement their commitments.

John McDermott, Director IFPRI-Led CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH) highlighted the main aspects of the Agriculture for Nutrition and Health partnership, built in order to support more collective and concerted action around the areas of nutrition and health actions related to agriculture. The program has two major focuses: the first one is how agriculture can improve diet quality for improving nutrition and health; and the second one is related to the multisectoral approach and it particularly concerns how can agriculture work together with health and social development sectors to improve nutrition for poor people,

especially for women and children in low and middle income countries. Moreover, of particular importance is the role of gender and culture. Strong emphasis is also on monitoring and evaluation so that nutrition sensitive development can be accountable, most importantly to the beneficiaries, but also to actors investing in these development actions.

Michael Hailu, Director of CTA made some final introductory comments on nutrition, with particular focus on the role of agriculture in addressing the nutritional challenge. Agriculture is essential in terms of improving the availability and quality of food and increasing incomes. Previous focus has been very much on improving quantity and not on dietary diversity; as a consequence of this approach, malnutrition is increasing among the poor segments of the population. Fortunately, there is a growing recognition to address malnutrition through nutrition specific interventions, though realizing that these interventions are not sufficient. CTA has been working very closely with FAO, the EC and the World Bank in developing a framework for joint action on agriculture and nutrition which was launched in the ICN 2. Some of the priorities identified in this framework are related to the mobilization of resources; the political commitment to strengthen the link between food and agriculture systems; and increasing the knowledge and evidence to maximize the impact of agriculture on nutrition.

Panel 1: Enhancing nutrition: a multi-sectoral approach

Viwanou Gnassounou, Assistant Secretary of the ACP Group chaired the first panel. This panel reviewed the key challenges and opportunities for enhanced nutrition of relevance to the agricultural sector in ACP countries and the lessons learned from research and practice.

Marie Ruel, Director, Division Poverty, Health and Nutrition, IFPRI addressed the issue of improving nutrition at scale. Malnutrition represents a continuum from hunger, which is usually referred to as plain lack of food, all the way to unbalanced diets leading to obesity. There has been a steady increase in obesity everywhere, with Latin America and Caribbean being particularly affected. In spite of the fact that many ACP regions have an enormous burden of stunting and undernourishment, they also have rapid raises in obesity. This aspect is of particular importance: under and over nutrition coexist in the same country, in the same household, and in the same individual, taking into consideration that obesity does not exclude anaemia. Furthermore, there are a number of reasons for which nutrition matters: first of all, a stunted child is a stunted adult-damage is irreversibly leading to stunted communities and then to stunted nations. Secondly, nutrition represents the foundation of development. It is

Improving nutrition through accountability, ownership and partnerships | HIGHLIGHTS



Tom Arnold



Lawrence Haddad



Stineke Oenema

not just a human, ethical or human rights issue, it is an economic issue and it is absolutely necessary for development. Finally, malnutrition is associated with 46 percent of child deaths, poor health, poor physical and cognitive development. Improving nutrition is critical for breaking the inter-generational transmission of poverty and it plays a key role in preventing non communicable diseases.

Tom Arnold, Interim SUN Movement Coordinator a.i., Ireland, spoke about the SUN Movement, its achievements, evaluation and future. The SUN Movement has developed since 2010 in the context of a failure of nutrition governance. A very strong feature that emerged from the beginning was that it would be country focused and country led, structured in a way that it would have multisectoral engagements. There is a strong emphasis on acquiring political prioritization for nutrition and putting in place national plans that are coherent, as well as ensuring that all stakeholders are involved. Globally, the 55 participating countries work together through a number of networks allowing them to share learning. Within four years of existence, a first evaluation indicates that the SUN has considerably contributed to raise political prioritization for nutrition at national and international level. The fact that various actors, comprising civil society, private sector etc. work towards a common purpose is a valuable asset.

However, findings also showed that in a number of countries progress is too slow. Another aspect that needs to be improved is accountability around the SUN Movement.

Jean-Pierre Halkin, Head of Unit, Rural Development, Food & Nutrition Security, EC, discussed the National Information Platform for Nutrition (NIPN) initiative, an ambitious and complex program. NIPN contributes to the EC's internal accountability for its commitments, which are to reduce stunting by 7 million by 2025 and to spend 3.5 billion in order to achieve this; countries' learning and strategic oversight of progress in addressing under nutrition; global learning about the linkages between investments, programming and progress.

NIPN represents a process with a technical core: compiling and cleaning data; purposeful analysis; intra-government consensus-building around nutrition as a national concern; dialogue with national stakeholders - harnessing existing knowledge and capabilities; discussing findings; agreeing on way forward. The country-led platforms facilitate the process for identifying government's priority questions and concerns regarding nutrition; contribute to increased analytical capacity to establish associations between interventions and changes in nutrition; represent a platform for dialogue, learning and planning on nutrition - through SUN processes; disseminate data and findings for decision making etc.

Lawrence Haddad, Senior Researcher, IFPRI, presented the key findings of the 2014 Global Nutrition Report. The Report aims to assess progress in nutrition at various levels; further actions necessary to accelerate progress; and ways to improve accountability. Nearly every country in the world is dealing with one form of malnutrition or another, almost every household in the world is affected by malnutrition and approximately one in two people on the Planet is experiencing malnutrition.

In this context, seven key messages are articulated around the Report: (i) nutrition is foundation for the sustainable development goals; (ii) malnutrition is a concern for all countries, not just for the low income or middle income; (iii) multiple burdens are the "new normal": there are multiple countries, and sometimes communities, households and even individuals that are dealing with more than one manifestation of malnutrition at the same time; (iv) progress is slow globally, but there is some spectacular country advances that need to be acknowledged; (v) targets need to be more ambitious; (vi) scaling-up is more possible than ever before; (vii) nutrition accountability needs to be strengthened.

Stineke Oenema, Co-chair of the Working Group on Food Security, Concord, addressed the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the support of nutrition. In order to improve nutrition, four pillars are essential: firstly, human rights and

Improving nutrition through accountability, ownership and partnerships | HIGHLIGHTS



Eric Tollens



Robinah Mulenga Kwofie



Fokko Wientjes



Lister Katsvairo

rights-based approach to food and nutrition security, tackling issues such as centrality of gender, peasants rights, consumers rights etc. Second pillar is the need of a coherent and coordinated management of nutrition throughout the lifecycle and at all levels; thirdly, sovereign local food and agricultural systems based on agrobiodiversity; and lastly, democratic governance of food and nutrition and global and national regulatory framework.

CSOs and NGOs are particular important since they are able to reach far and deeply into communities that are most affected by malnutrition.

Questions and comments focused on the role of local NGOs in improving nutrition; the correlation between data and progress in nutrition; basis on which the NIPN initiative selects its countries and the role of private sector.

Panel 2: Best practices in addressing nutrition challenges

Eric Tollens, Professor Emeritus of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven chaired the second panel. The discussion focused on the examples and drivers of successes related to nutrition programs at national level. It also highlighted successes in sustainable partnerships and PPPs and the key role of the private sector.

Robinah Mulenga Kwofie, Executive Director, National Food and Nutrition Commission, Zambia provided an overview of the Zambia National Strategies and Policies on Nutrition and related sectors. In Zambia, progress has been made, but there is still a need to accelerate it. Stunting has been reduced from 45 percent to 40 percent in 2013-2014. Zambia is experiencing the double burden of both under and over nutrition. Overweight and obesity have increased among women from 19 percent in 2007 to 23 percent in 2013-2014.

Zambia has put in place the National Food and Nutrition Commission (NFNC) under the Ministry of Health responsible for nutrition established by Act of 1967, being one of the very few countries to do this. Nutrition specific legislation comprises National Food and Nutrition Policy; Sixth National Development Plan (2011-2016), National Food and Nutrition Strategic Plan for Zambia (NFNSP 2011-2015) etc. Critical success factors are (i) high political commitment; (ii) nutrition budget and expenditure; (iii) partnership and networking; (iv) accountability efforts. Nonetheless, some of the key challenges are difficulties to quantify and track investment in nutrition; and nutrition governance bodies are not yet fully functional.

Fokko Wientjes, Vice-President Corporate Sustainability & Public Private Partnerships, DSM spoke about successes in PPPs and the

role of the private sector in support of nutrition, acknowledging the responsibility of the private sector in this area. As the largest micronutrients producers in the world, DSM has the means to succeed, since it possesses know-how, innovation power, products etc. Two things are extremely important and cannot be stressed enough: to accelerate and scale. The private sector is the largest food producer and food supplier in the world therefore it needs to be involved.

In 2007, DSM teamed up with the World Food Program (WFP) in order to improve the food basket that WFP was providing. At a later stage, a target of 25 to 30 million beneficiaries of improved nutrition was established by 2015. The target was already achieved in 2014. Drivers of success within this partnership were a shared vision, separate accountability, trust, working in networks.

Lister Katsvairo, Country Manager, HarvestPlus, Rwanda presented the case of iron biofortified beans in Rwanda. Biofortification represents the agricultural approach to tackle malnutrition, offering the ability to the farmers to address micronutrient deficiency. In Rwanda, first varieties of high iron beans were released in 2010 and currently, there are 10 biofortified bean varieties. Intensive dissemination began only in March 2012 and to date, more than 8 hundred thousand households have been

Improving nutrition through accountability, ownership and partnerships | HIGHLIGHTS



Rose Ndolo



Boitshepo Giyose

reached. This work is being successful due to several factors: first and foremost, the government owns the initiative; secondly, the private sector is involved in the process; in addition, there are several delivery channels: agro-dealers, farmer cooperatives, churches, payback system etc.

Next steps of the biofortification process are scaling up through even more partners in the bean value chain-private sector, NGOs, and multilaterals; strengthening seed systems and market linkages; reaching a critical, sustainable market share for iron beans; introducing more biofortified crops and micronutrients; and sharing evidence and lessons learned in scaling up, in Rwanda and with other countries.

Rose Ndolo, Senior Child Nutrition & FS Programmes Adviser, World Vision UK shared examples of nutrition support through community participation and action in Kenya. In Kenya, no significant change occurred in the nutrition status of children under five years. Furthermore, Kenya is not on course to meet WHA

targets for stunting and wasting. In this context, World Vision focuses on improving nutrition of children under five, women and vulnerable groups. Successful examples of project concerned linking nutrition and agriculture and their impact was significant: under-weight prevalence was sustainably reduced. These initiatives emphasized that communities have to be at the core for sustainable linkages; it is necessary to build cross – sectoral/ ministerial collaborations for ownership; targeting the most vulnerable, malnourished children, children under 2 and 5 years, women, is of particular importance.

Boitshepo Giyose, Senior Nutrition Officer ESNP, FAO discussed the best practices in measuring impact agriculture and nutrition. Nowadays, addressing malnutrition needs to take into account issues such as urbanisation, globalisation, market integration, triple burden of malnutrition. There is a stringent need to do business differently and to measure progress and impact differently and accountability plays a key role in this respect.

Food security and nutrition situation, actions, as well as outcomes of the actions should be measured. Challenges in terms of measurement concern tracking actual implementation of policies; tracking private investments is also very difficult; limited capacities: even basic monitoring is often missing; monitoring impact of policies on diets proves to be difficult because of long and complex impact pathways, as well as interactions between policies.

Questions and comments focused on multisectoral approach; how does the EU address this multisectoral approach between different DGs and also at country level; accurate data; the role of local knowledge; sustainable business case for fortification; aflatoxin contamination in food.

Michael Hailu, Director of CTA concluded with the key messages raised in the Briefing, highlighting the importance of country ownership, accountability, and expressed the need for further and strengthen dialogue on improving nutrition.

Further information available online:

- Brussels Briefings: <http://brusselsbriefings.net/>
- Improving nutrition through accountability, ownership and partnerships: <https://brusselsbriefings.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/cta-reader-bb41.pdf>
- Report prepared by Alina Moglan, Research Assistant, CTA Brussels Office