



Learning from History: A look at agriculture and food based approaches to address malnutrition at the World Bank

Joint project by
World Bank Agriculture & Environmental Service Dept. (AES)
World Bank Group Archives
and the
SecureNutrition Knowledge Platform

June 2014



SecureNutrition
linking agriculture, food security, and nutrition

Scope of Project

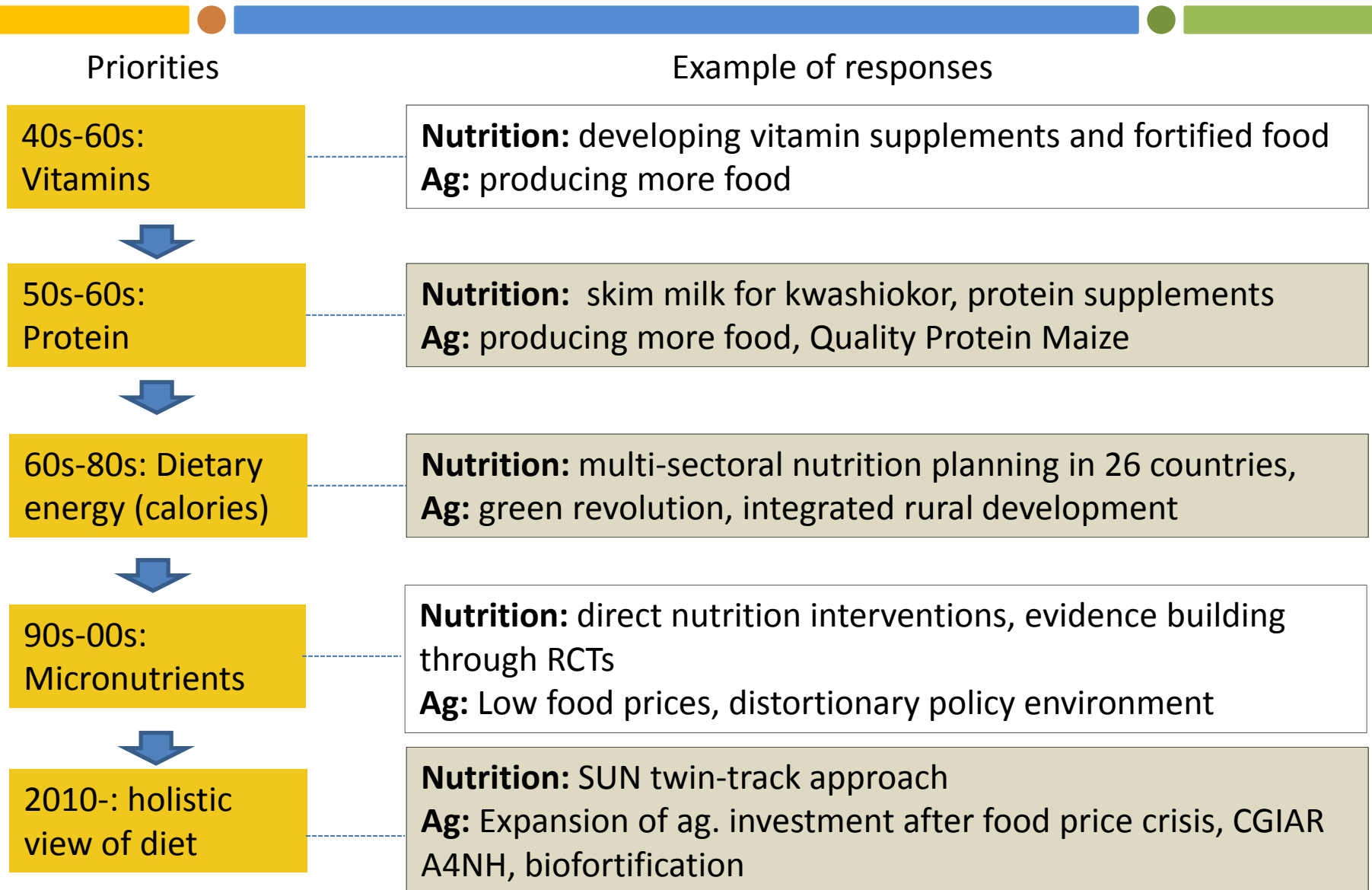


- Output
 - Research paper (AES publication, June 2014)
 - Interactive timeline on SecureNutrition website
- Resources
 - Historical documents from the WBG Archives including reports, meeting minutes, speeches, and oral history transcripts of retired staff
 - Technical adviser: Alan Berg
 - Personal interviews with over 20 experts
- Period covered
 - 1960s to today (more detail on 1973 and onwards)

Guiding questions of the research paper:

- How has the Bank addressed nutrition sensitive agriculture in the past?
- What are the lessons for today?

Priorities for nutrition have been a moving target



1973: Bank starts work on nutrition



1973

A strategy for rural development with a focus on smallholder agriculture



1973

Establishment of a nutrition unit at the World Bank

In November, 1973, the World Bank approved the "Policy Guidelines for Bank Nutrition Activities." For the first time a nutrition unit was established in the Bank. But because of lack of experience and evidence in international nutrition programs, the first World Bank nutrition projects had to have special Board oversight; a very unusual step, demonstrating the nervousness of the Bank to invest in this area.

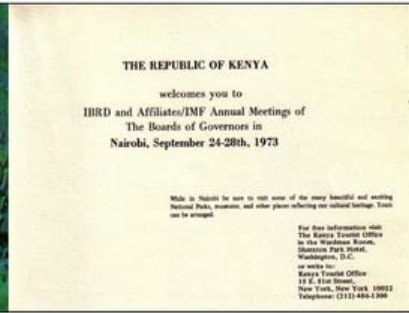


1975

Multi-sectoral Nutrition planning and integrated Rural Development (1970s - 1980s)



1973: Bank focuses on poverty alleviation; rural development is the main tool



1973

A strategy for rural development with a focus on smallholder agriculture

In his address to the Board of Governors at the 1973 annual general meetings in Nairobi, Kenya, President McNamara proposed a strategy for rural development with an emphasis on productivity of smallholder agriculture. He stated that 70% of the poor live in rural areas, and by tacking the productivity of small farmers, countries should make a real dent in poverty alleviation. Although the importance of agriculture for poverty reduction was clearly articulated, the link between nutrition and agriculture was not explored. [Listen to the audio of this speech.](#)

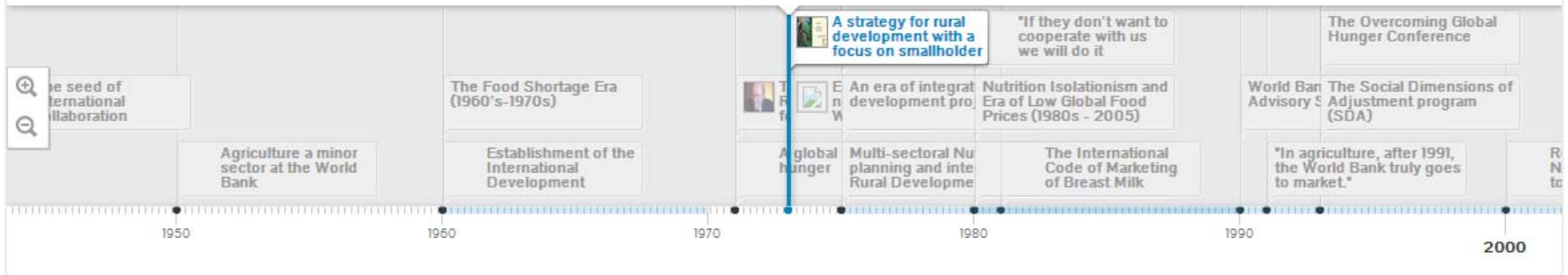


1971
A global focus on hunger.

Welcome card for 1973 Annual Meeting in Kenya.



1973
Establishment of a nutrition unit at the World Bank



Mid 80s: Paths diverge as evidence grows on direct nutrition interventions

- Agriculture:
 - Failed integrated rural development operations (half of all indicate failure, 2/3 failure in Africa)
 - Declining interest in ag. investment due to uncondusive policy environment, poor portfolio performance, low global food prices, new emerging topics (environment, girls education etc)
- Nutrition:
 - Data on child anthropometry
 - Evidence on breastfeeding, deworming, community-based nutrition, growth monitoring
 - “Hidden hunger”
 - Focus on supplementation, fortification (for food)

Nutrition isolationism



Nursing mother in hospital, Sri Lanka



1980
The Tamil Nadu
Integrated
Nutrition project
(TNIP)

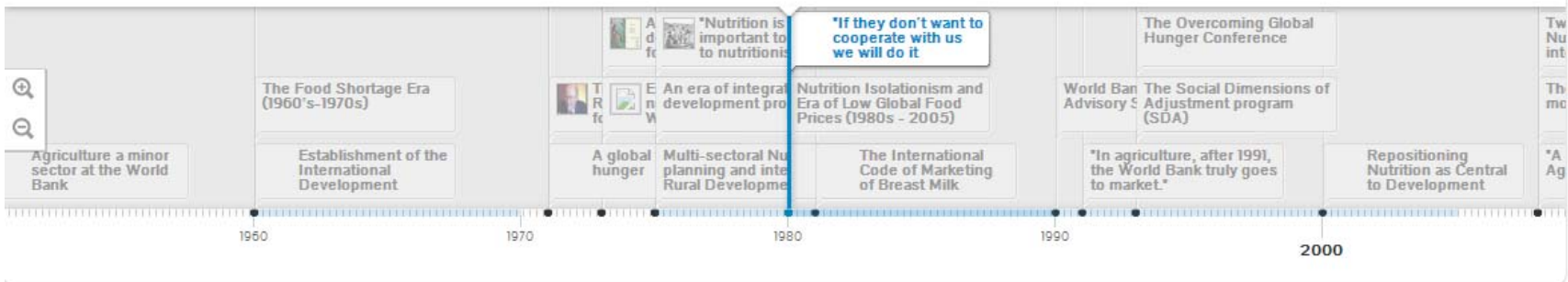


1980
Nutrition
Isolationism and
Era of Low Global
Food Prices
(1980s - 2005)

1980

"If they don't want to cooperate with us we will do it ourselves"

The nutrition community's lack of success in convincing other sectors to tackle nutrition through complex coordination and planning led to a period sometimes referred to as "nutrition isolationism", focusing on direct nutrition interventions that did not require multi-sectoral involvement, such as micronutrients and breastfeeding promotion.



2010 SUN: Twin track approach

Nutrition-sensitive strategies increase the impact of specific actions for nutrition



Specific Actions for Nutrition

Feeding Practices & Behaviors:

Encouraging exclusive breastfeeding up to 6 months of age and continued breastfeeding together with appropriate and nutritious food up to 2 years of age and beyond

Fortification of foods: Enabling access to nutrients through incorporating them into foods

Micronutrient supplementation: Direct provision of extra nutrients

Treatment of acute malnutrition: Enabling persons with moderate and severe malnutrition to access effective treatment



Nutrition-Sensitive Strategies

Agriculture: Making nutritious food more accessible to everyone, and supporting small farms as a source of income for women and families

Clean Water & Sanitation: Improving access to reduce infection and disease

Education & Employment: Making sure children have the nutrition needed to learn and earn a decent income as adults

Health Care: Access to services that enable women & children to be healthy

Support for Resilience: Establishing a stronger, healthier population and sustained prosperity to better endure emergencies and conflicts

Summary: Past efforts did not change the main ag. discourse

- Many, many **analytical work and guidelines** from both ag. and nutrition
- Inclusion of nutrition in **agriculture strategies and 40+ rural development projects** (without proper M&E)
- **High-level support** from Bank mgmt ('93 Overcoming Global Hunger Conference – *“food security is about access and nutrition as much as about production”* (WB VP Serageldin))
- Provision of **nutrition technical assistance** to Bank project teams (Nutrition Advisory Service in the 90s)

Persistent storyline in ag. has been that **aggregate increase in food supply and improved income** are the ways in which it can/should contribute to nutrition

Today: Renewed interest for nutrition through agriculture

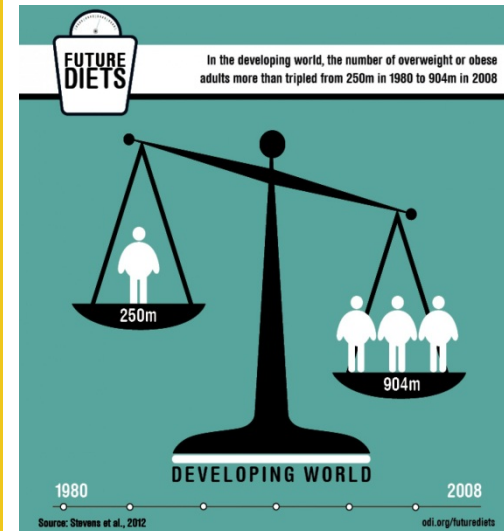
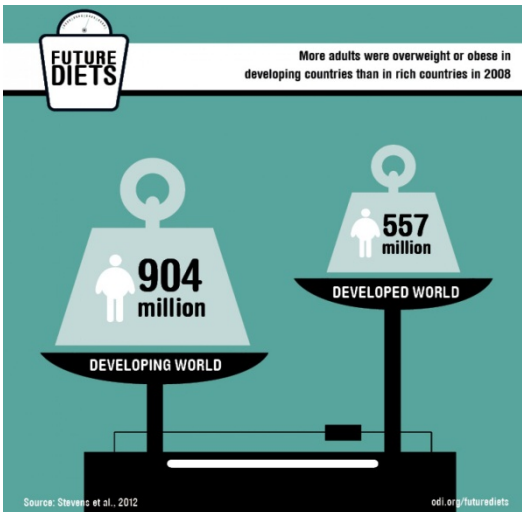
1970s: Food shortage paradigm

- Lack of calories *was* the major problem



Vision: **Nutritious** food shortage paradigm

- Triple burden of malnutrition in all regions
- Go beyond reduce hunger
- Aim to provide enough food for all to access nutritious diets



Recommendations with key actions

- 1) Establish a **common vision** globally for agriculture's role in improving nutrition, with measurable outcomes and targets
- 2) Align ag. investments to **level the playing field** for nutritious food
- 3) **Create demand** for nutritious and sustainable food
- 4) Build and sustain **capacity** for addressing nutrition through agriculture and to monitor its progress