

Agri-food policy and governance for nutrition and health



4th Annual LCIRAH Conference

June 3-4 2014, London

Opening Keynote speaker:
Per Pinstrup-Andersen
(Cornell University, USA):

Nutrition-enhancing
policies for food and
agricultural systems

*How can food and
agricultural systems be
changed to improve
nutrition?*

**A multi-sectoral approach
is key:** improving nutrition
takes several disciplines
coming together to
prioritize nutrition, such as
by combining
interventions for food,
water, sanitation & health
to produce co-benefits and
multiple wins.

**The research gap on how
large-scale changes in
food systems affect
nutrition needs to be
addressed**

**It is important to consider
large-scale and context-
specific realities for policy
levers to improve
nutrition and food
security by recognizing:**

- the need to focus outside
basic staple grains to
reduce the costs of a
diversified diet
- that land grabbing from
small-holder farmers
reduces net food security
- that climate change
affects agricultural outputs
- that [women's]
productivity is crucial
- that more food is not a
solution in itself

The theme for the 2014 LCIRAH – Leverhulme Centre for Integrative Research on Agriculture and Health - conference was **agri-food policy and governance for nutrition and health**. The conference brought together researchers from around the world to examine critically the impact of global, regional and national agri-food policies, institutions and governance on human health and nutrition and discuss how to optimize the impact of institutions and governance in the agri-food system on human health and nutrition.

Agri-food governance for nutrition and health

Lawrence Haddad (IFPRI, USA) established the tone for thinking about how institutions provide governance for nutrition and health by posing the challenging question: *how do we change food system components and how can the system function to make it easier to implement nutrition-improving outcomes?* Haddad then addressed the need for greater multi-sectoral governance and policymaking in nutrition and health - a theme that recurred throughout the conference. Patrick Webb (Tufts University, USA) asked the audience to think about *what exactly is it that we understand by governance; and how do we measure governance and associate changes in governance with changes in nutrition outcomes on the ground?* Dr. Webb reported preliminary research evidence from Nepal showing that no stakeholder (governmental or non-governmental) identified food availability as the main barrier to nutrition-related health problems, and that presumed barriers varied by governance level.

Several speakers highlighted that context matters and drives the underlying determinants of nutrition and health and the policy process. Thus, a critical understanding and consideration of local context is important for effective governance for nutrition. Keynote speaker Lindiwe Sibanda (FANRPAN, South Africa) presented examples of how context includes culture and how understanding cultural myths and taboos are essential to policymaking. She observed that critical barriers to effective governance occur at both the national and international levels, such as unclear mandates; unclear roles and thus, responses; lack of standardization and coordination; and legal and political constraints. Additional barriers experienced in her work in international governance included language differences, lack of trust, problems to determine the accuracy of information; and breaches to confidentiality.

Agri-food policy for nutrition and health

Corinna Hawkes (WCRF, USA) argued for the important role that governance can play in addressing nutrition and health outcomes, and stated that there are three critical areas within policymaking to consider in the development of effective food system solutions: 1) policy and investment coherence; 2) context-specific policies; and 3) sound governance. Carl Lachat (Ghent University, Belgium) presented findings from a comprehensive analysis of 73 food and nutrition policies from eight countries showing that agri-food policies may have greater impacts if they: increase incentives for the availability, access and consumption of nutritious foods; monitor dietary consumption and access to nutritious foods; focus on measures to protect and empower women and the poor; develop capacity and human resources; and support multi-sectoral collaborations. Avinash Kishore (IFPRI, USA), and Anne-Marie Thow (University of Sydney, Australia) provided examples of agri-food policies with positive impacts on nutrition and health: The public distribution systems (PDS) in India improved dietary diversity; and food standards policy in Ghana successfully reduced the amount of meats with high saturated fat content in the food supply.

Richard Smith (LSHTM, UK) stated that risk factors for nutrition and health problems are affected by economic factors, including trade and vice versa. Nutrition and health should thus have a greater role in the design and implementation of future agri-food related policies. Helen Walls (LCIRAH, LSHTM, UK and ANU, Australia) provided an example by

Keynote speaker: Lindiwe Sibanda (FANRPAN, South Africa): Demystify myths to power the way for evidence based food & nutrition security policies

Africa has the highest no. of stunted children

Must look at the cultural causes of under-nutrition that will also help improve nutrition security. Cultural myths include:

- being overweight a symbol of wealth/status
- micronutrients are for medical conditions
- there are special gender-specific foods
- stunting is hereditary

African tradition and culture should embrace and prioritize nutrition

Closing Keynote speaker: Barry Popkin (University of North Carolina, USA): Challenges we face: the shifting food system and nutritional status picture

One million people every year are becoming overweight: within both urban and rural areas.

We must deal with rapidly growing modern food systems: especially as technology continues to make lifestyles even more sedentary. For every supermarket there are 5-6 convenience stores. Thus, more rural and urban people are buying packaged processed foods.

Many countries have a challenging dual burden of over- and under-nutrition: requires an urgent commitment from governments and policymakers.

examining the level of political priority accorded to nutrition-related health considerations in the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Better food safety policies were also emphasised as crucial in preventing public health problems; particularly related to animal sourced foods. Delia Grace (ILRI, Kenya) highlighted how food safety policies can be strengthened by improving: collective governance; organization within and across governments and institutions to collaborate on overlapping food safety mandates; food safety regulations within policies; and by giving greater attention to the poor. Both Grace and Lucila Lapar (ILRI, Vietnam) stated the need for novel food safety policies which adapt to the context and consider local value chains, customs, and culture.

Building capacity and addressing complexity in nutrition and health

The food system is complex and will face challenges, among others, arising from population and economic growth with subsequent changes in food demand and also climate change. Throughout the conference, speakers identified myriad complexities in agri-health policymaking that are important to better understand to improve policy, including: 1) the relationships between and within government sectors; 2) the utility of specific policies, programs, and monitoring systems that can be used to improve nutrition and health; and 3) the monitoring of progress of agri-food related policies. Regarding the latter, Hazel Malapit (IFPRI, USA) presented the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) as a tool that can be used in policy and program evaluations to inform agri-food policymakers as to whether programs (gender-oriented or not) are positively impacting women. Rebecca Kanter (LSHTM, UK) presented a comprehensive conceptual framework that policymakers from different sectors can use to better understand the linkages between agricultural and food system policies to nutrition and health. This framework aims to shift the discourse from nutrition and health problems to that of policy actions and solutions. Claudia Job Schmitt (University Federal Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) provided examples of multi-sectoral agri-food policymaking in Brazil that have improved nutrition and health of its populations. In sum, several speakers emphasized the need for greater multi-sectoral policymaking in agri-food policies; and greater funding for agri-health research to provide an evidence base.

New agri-health initiatives

Innovative Metrics and Methods for Agriculture and Nutrition Actions (IMMANA)

The aim of IMMANA, supported by DFID, and coordinated by LCIRAH with the Tufts Friedman School as partners, is to accelerate the development of a robust and coherent scientific base to support effective policy and investments in agriculture for improved nutrition and health. This will be done by: 1) developing new methods and metrics via competitive research grants; 2) fostering the capacity building via post-doctoral fellowships; and 3) strengthening interdisciplinary research collaboration through a global network.

Agriculture, Nutrition and Health Academy (ANHA; or *The Academy*)

The Academy, while part of IMMANA, is itself a broader venture led by LCIRAH and CGIAR's Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH) programme. The Academy is focused on "*developing a cadre of agriculture, nutrition and health researchers who have the knowledge, collaborative links and tools to support the design and evaluation of the growing number of nutrition- and health-sensitive agricultural interventions.*"

Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition

The Global Panel, in which LIDC acts as the Secretariat, co-chaired by Sir. John Beddington (former UK Government Chief Scientific Advisor) and John Kufuor (former President of Ghana) consists of a group of experts working towards changing the dialogue in agriculture and health in that it is not limited to under-nutrition and agriculture. It also incorporates obesity and NCDs, and focuses on whole food systems, including food value chains and policy interventions. Readers can learn more about it by watching a video shown to conference participants at: <http://www.glopan.org/resources>