



ACCELERATING THE END OF HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION

— A GLOBAL EVENT —

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INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE (IFPRI)
FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS (FAO)

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Nations urged to accelerate efforts to wipe out hunger and malnutrition **With hunger and obesity on the rise, a global forum aims to catalyze urgent action to end all forms of undernutrition by 2030**

28 November 2018, Bangkok, Thailand – With rising levels of global hunger putting the goal of ending malnutrition in all its forms by 2030 in serious jeopardy, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) have today launched a global conference aimed at urgently accelerating efforts to achieve Zero Hunger worldwide.

After decades of impressive reductions in the numbers of undernourished people, hunger is again on the march. According to the [latest report published jointly by FAO and four other UN agencies](#), about 820 million people on the planet are malnourished.

“This is the third consecutive year that progress in ending hunger has stalled and now has actually increased (in 2015, 2016 and 2017). Child stunting is a major problem and nearly two billion still suffer from hidden hunger or a deficiency of important nutrients. This also includes people who are overweight or obese,” said FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva in a video message to the conference.

Pointing out that the number of hungry and malnourished people in the world has gone back up to levels last seen ten years ago, he added: “After decades of gains in fighting hunger, this is a serious setback and FAO and the UN sister agencies, together with member governments and other partners, are all very concerned.”

While there are big challenges in reaching Zero Hunger, FAO and IFPRI are stressing that the goal is still achievable.

But there is no time to waste.

“After many years of tremendous global progress in reducing hunger and malnutrition, it is painfully clear that our current pace is not sufficient to end hunger by 2030, but we can still achieve this goal,” said Shenggen Fan, IFPRI Director General. “Many countries – from China, to Ethiopia, to Bangladesh, to Brazil – have achieved remarkable reductions in hunger and malnutrition, and those successes hold important lessons for the places currently struggling to make significant progress.”

The conference, attracting delegates primarily from Africa and Asia is providing a platform to accelerate the sharing of existing specialty knowledge, approaches and tools that have led to success in many countries so others can learn, adapt and accelerate their own work to reduce hunger and malnutrition in sustainable ways.

Ending hunger and malnutrition by the numbers

While Africa continues to be the hungriest continent per capita, the Asia-Pacific region has the highest total number of undernourished – more than 500 million by FAO estimates.

The size of the global challenge means it must be addressed meaningfully and immediately. For example, the Asia-Pacific region is home to more than 60 percent of the world’s undernourished, and in order for it to achieve Zero Hunger by 2030 the countries of the region need to collectively lift more than 110 000 people out of hunger each and every day for the next 12 years.

The urgency of the task at hand cannot be overstated – and ending undernutrition is more complex than many realize. The rise in global hunger is witnessed alongside an increase in obesity, which brings with it an entirely different set of health and economic challenges for the world now and in the future.

Leveraging good public policy and knowledge to accelerate the arrival of Zero Hunger

The conference is highlighting how great strides have been made in many countries in reducing hunger and malnutrition, rapidly and sustainably, through improvements in public policies, focused investments and the harnessing of new technologies.

Bangladesh, for example, has achieved one of the fastest reductions in child underweight and stunting in history, largely by using innovative public policies to improve agriculture and nutrition. Policies supporting agricultural growth helped increase agricultural production, while other policies supported family planning, stronger health services, growing school attendance, greater access to drinking water and sanitation, and women’s empowerment. Together, these policies reinforced each other to create an environment of improved food security and nutrition for millions of Bangladeshis.

Economic growth in China lifted millions out of both hunger and poverty, while Brazil and Ethiopia transformed their food systems and diminished the threat of hunger through targeted investments in agricultural research and development (R&D) and social protection

programmes. Starting in the mid-1980s and continuing over two decades, crop production in Brazil grew by 77 percent and that -- combined with the country's Fome Zero programme, established in 2003 to provide beneficiaries a wide range of social services -- saw hunger and undernutrition nearly eradicated in just ten years.

Similarly, Ethiopia's large-scale investments in agricultural have led to substantial growth in the production of cereals and the availability of food, while the creation of the Productive Safety Net Programme provides food and/or cash to needy households, which are direct for the most needy and conditional on a work requirement for others. These investments, combined with large public expenditures in health and education, have dramatically reduced hunger and undernutrition, shifting the international image of Ethiopia from victim of frequent famines to development success story.

Accelerating the roll out of technology and better food systems

Worldwide, improvements in technology are helping to deliver better nutrition. For example, boosting the nutritional value of staple foods through fortification or crops themselves through biofortification is helping reduce incidence of harmful health conditions like anemia and improve cognitive development in places as diverse as Zambia and India.

And approaches like precision farming, drip irrigation, conservation agriculture, and the introduction of staples that are resilient to droughts and floods all represent additional examples of powerful tools that can help us produce greater amounts of more nutritious foods in more sustainable ways.

The proliferation of new communications technologies, and ability to harness big data, also offer opportunities to scale up successes significantly to even greater impact.

But innovation extends far beyond apps, drones or farm machinery. Innovation in agriculture can involve using new social, organizational and institutional processes to support farmers and sustainably intensify production. These can range from building stronger producer self-help groups and extension services, to improving access to markets and credit in pioneering ways, to developing new ways of processing, storage, transport and marketing food. Innovation can be decidedly "low tech" – for example leaving stands of trees on farms intact to promote soil health and enhance agroecosystem productivity. Innovations in intervention design can boost their potential impact, like when behavior change communications that encourage the adoption of ideal nutrition and child feeding practices are integrated into social protection programmes to improve household nutrition as well as food consumption.

Marshalling political will, knowledge, and brainpower

By convening key figures from the worlds of research, policymaking, and development programme implementation to share knowledge of the policies, interventions, and technologies that have effectively accelerated the elimination of undernutrition, the conference aims to catalyze the next era of rapid reductions in hunger and malnutrition.

“We have the tools, and we have the knowledge to eliminate hunger in the next 12 years,” said Fan. “By empowering key actors in policymaking, research, and program implementation with those tools and knowledge, we can reach this goal and help millions of people achieve their full potential.”

“We need to work closely together more than ever, sharing with each other those successful experiences. If we can accelerate this knowledge exchange, then we can accelerate its implementation and take actions that are more concrete,” Graziano da Silva said. “Hunger and obesity are not simply an individual’s problem. They are public issues. That is why this conference jointly convened by IFPRI and FAO is so important. We must accelerate our actions to end hunger and malnutrition. But we also need stronger political will and greater financial commitment to get the job done. Political will is fundamental.”

The IFPRI-FAO Conference on Accelerating the End of Hunger and Malnutrition, is taking place in Bangkok and runs 28-30 November, 2018.

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The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) seeks sustainable solutions for ending hunger and poverty. IFPRI was established in 1975 to identify and analyze alternative national and international strategies and policies for meeting the food needs of the developing world, with particular emphasis on low-income countries and on the poorer groups in those countries Visit: www.ifpri.org