



FEED THE FUTURE

The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative

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USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE


Strengthening Partnerships, Results
and Innovations in Nutrition Globally

David Yanggen's Response to the Key Note Address

Why did USAID make the decision to focus on agriculture under its FtF investment?

- We have the availability of food in our results framework.
- The food price crisis of 2007-08, where there was a large spike of food crisis and over 100 million people were thrust into poverty.
- People dedicate a great percentage of their income on food expenditures and they are greatly affected when prices go up – greater availability, generally keeps prices a bit more affordable.
- Ag investment in development organizations has been gutted for many years so an increase in production was inconceivable without greater investment (where once 25% of development and reduced to around 6%).

David outlined the importance of agriculture to human and economic development as a whole, reminding participants that agriculture is the foundation of all human civilization.

- It contributed to greater specialization, allowing for one or two to produce for many more people, leading to specialization in politics, trade, textiles, etc. Mesopotamia/ China/ America's domestication of certain foods which led to foundations of civilization.
- Supported concepts of innovation, e.g. the four field rotation systems in Britain, Green Revolution.
- Ag production is estimated to have saved billions of lives. Successes in green revolution 0 countries which have made huge strides, Korea, Malaysia, India. The region that was bypassed, Africa, has highest rates of food insecurity and malnutrition. Many countries successful in development have started with successful agriculture sector; Ag is a necessary prerequisite for development.

At the same, agricultural innovations and trends have also received quite a bit of criticism, including the Green Revolution. Issue is there is no counterfactual. We cannot point to other countries that did not develop or people that did not die. And, in aggregate terms, overall pop growth has led to an increase in the absolute number of people who are undernourished.

What has agriculture been able (or not able) to do to affect nutritional status?

- Improved incomes do not necessarily lead to dietary diversity. Increased rice yields, etc. have not led to improvements in nutrition, even across wealth groups. There is clearly a need for nutritional education.
- Agriculture is not good at dealing with water borne diseases, parasites, etc., which undermine the body's ability to absorb the food. Ag not effective in addressing WASH.
- Other key health and nutrition interventions such as exclusive breastfeeding, which have been proven to contribute to improved nutrition are not an agriculture focus.

In order for agriculture to be more effective in addressing nutrition in the short run, we have to get the incentives right. In other words, what ag practices have a positive impact on production **and** nutrition simultaneously? Some examples from Bangladesh:

- Applications of Zn fertilizer can increase Zinc (an essential micronutrient) uptake by human consumers while also contributing to increasing rice yields.
- Use of quick maturing varieties of rice – also higher in protein and iron, etc. and can increase incomes.
- Promotion of rice milling techniques that the polishing time and can have significant cost savings/reduction in labor and can also increase iron and Zinc content.

Conclusion: There is clear evidence that ag development resulting in increased efficiencies and overall quantity of crop production has had a dramatic impact on poverty and food security. These impacts have not been linear and there are many things that agriculture cannot do such as many of the behavior-centered actions related to hygiene, exclusive breastfeeding, etc. Therefore, we need an integrated approach. Finally, for agriculture to be more effective in addressing malnutrition it is critical to get incentives right!