



## **Background paper WG 4: Nutrition education**

### **Global situation**

Nutritional knowledge about and competences concerning for example existing food, the production of this food, its correct storage, suitable processing and above all its composition and preparation are indispensable for adequate nutrition. This applies equally to producers and consumers. Undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, overweight, obesity and nutrition-related non-communicable diseases exist side by side in many countries of the world and are fostered by a lack of nutritional knowledge and skills, insufficient or misleading information, and inadequate nutritional habits. It is often not just insufficient supply or access to adequate and high-quality food that causes malnutrition; a vital role is also played by whether people have knowledge of (i) the composition of good nutrition, (ii) how foods can be combined to create nutritional synergies (e.g. the combination of rice and beans to make a high-quality source of protein), (iii) what role health plays and (iv) how people can be motivated to change their production methods and daily consumption habits.

The factors that are essential for achieving a good nutritional status include the level of education and access to information as well as the level of income. Comprehensive nutrition education and counselling, based on the needs of the population, is therefore a key component for programmes that focus on agricultural production, downstream sectors (processing and marketing) and health promotion. It is also important to prevent misleading food advertising.

WG 4 therefore focuses on determining what framework is necessary to provide caregivers, parents, children, educational staff, pupils and producers with access to information and nutrition education and to ensure that the practical implementation of the acquired knowledge achieves the goal of promoting balanced nutrition.

### **Priority issues:**

#### **I. Nutrition education for households and in schools**

Nutritious and healthy meals for infants, young children and in schools are a vital foundation for enabling people to develop healthily. The first 1000 days (from conception to the age of two) are particularly important for mental and physical development. The nutritional status of infants and young children is determined by the nutritional status of mothers at the time of conception, by the diet and



health of the mother during pregnancy, by breastfeeding exclusively for the first six months after birth, by complementary breastfeeding for up to two years or more, and by the change to weaning food after the first six months.

Limited access to sufficient and diverse foods and insufficient or incorrect nutritional knowledge about the correct composition and preparation of weaning food are usually named as the main reasons for young children receiving unbalanced nutrition. This underlines the particular responsibility that industry bears in manufacturing and marketing food for this vulnerable consumer group.

Awareness about the selection and quality of foods and about eating habits is often established at home, but a significant influence also comes from school. Healthy school meals and nutrition education in schools are therefore important entry points worldwide.

## **II. Nutrition education in agriculture**

For sustainable agriculture, producers must have i.a. in-depth knowledge of the structure of the soil, of a diverse mix of crops, of sustainable production and of high-quality processing that minimises post-harvest food losses and retains the nutritional value of foods. There are a large number of measures and approaches that provide nutritional information as cross-cutting agricultural issues and in this way have an impact on nutritional habits. Farmer Nutrition Schools for Improved Household Nutrition are a widespread model in Bangladesh. The focus is on supporting group-based learning for producers on-site to achieve nutritional effects through diversified agriculture (vegetables, fish, and poultry) combined with nutrition and hygiene counselling. A vital role is played by the cooperation with and between the actors at the respective ministries of agriculture, health and family care (cross-reference to WG 1).

### **Guiding questions:**

1. What structures and behavioural patterns need to be influenced in families in order to improve their nutritional status, in particular that of women and young children?
2. How can teachers be made more aware of the relevance of pupils having good nutrition education and a good nutritional status?
3. What successful approaches exist for integrating nutrition aspects into agricultural training and how can modern information and communications technologies (ICT) be used?
4. What synergies and challenges exist in respect of diversification, processing and women empowerment?



5. What policy framework is required to enable people to make and implement informed decisions about their own nutrition and that of their children? What framework and incentives are required in order to ensure the integration of nutritional aspects into educational systems?

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