



Food Consumption and Nutrition

Producing plentiful, high-quality food in a sustainable fashion is the vital first step toward food and nutrition security. But production is not enough to attain optimum nutrition for all. All people must have access to the right quantity and quality of foods, and to foods that are safe and culturally acceptable. The Food Consumption and Nutrition Division (FCND) takes the lead at IFPRI in research to reduce household poverty and ensure food and nutrition security among the world's poor. Research within FCND explores far-reaching questions, including:

- *How can programs and policies best help families rise out of poverty and achieve food and nutrition security?*
- *With over-nutrition and obesity on the rise in developing countries where millions still go hungry, how can policies and programs encourage healthy diets and facilitate a transition from hunger to health?*
- *How might food and nutrition policies and programs help prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and mitigate its impacts?*

FCND research and outreach activities are organized into six research programs, each conducting studies in a number of countries.



RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Pathways from Poverty

This research program seeks to understand how policies, program interventions, and other factors can reduce poverty and hunger—and use this knowledge to develop more effective policy. Longitudinal data on individuals, households, and communities are used to address several broad questions, including:

- Why do some people and households get ahead while others fall further into poverty?
- To what extent can we identify policies and interventions that help people accumulate assets, acquire access to institutions, and minimize shocks?
- How do broader trends affect whether people become richer or poorer over time?

Large-Scale Interventions to Enhance Human Capital

Safety net programs—generally used to protect

people from destitution in the short term—may be able to offer routes out of poverty for the long term as well. Recent approaches to safety nets and social protection combine cash assistance with investments in human capital—usually health, education, and nutrition—to improve the future income-earning potential of beneficiaries. Cash or food assistance programs can also provide skills training, build organizational capacity, and create assets. Such programs can be designed to target specific groups such as the extreme poor, women, or households suffering from HIV/AIDS.

This research program aims to:

- improve the quality and impacts of interventions to reduce poverty in the short and long term
- analyze political and institutional factors that affect feasibility and performance
- evaluate and compare various interventions, and build capacity for intervention design and implementation.

Urban Challenges to Food and Nutrition Security

No developing country can afford to ignore the phenomenon of urbanization. Within the next 20 years, more poor and undernourished people in developing countries will live in cities than in the countryside. Even in regions with relatively low levels of urbanization, including Africa and parts of Asia, millions of the poor already live in cities. Malnutrition in the poorest areas of cities often rivals that of rural areas.

Research from this program, launched in 1995, has provided policymakers, program administrators and development practitioners with information on the trends and determinants of urban poverty and food and nutrition security.

Recent work has:

- analyzed successful urban food and nutrition programs, particularly those using a community development approach
- investigated urban-rural links and their effects on urban and rural poverty, and
- explored key aspects of urban livelihoods generally overlooked by policymakers and practitioners, including seasonality and urban agriculture.

Diet Quality and Diet Changes of the Poor

Increasingly, poor dietary quality is overtaking hunger as the chief nutritional problem facing poor people worldwide. Poor diet quality includes both 1) not enough vitamins and minerals or other essential nutrients and 2) too much of other food components such as saturated fats, added sugars and salt. The latter can lead to obesity and increase the risk of “non-communicable” diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. Diet changes and reduced exercise—with resulting negative health consequences—are spreading at historically rapid rates. And they disproportionately affect the poor.

Specific objectives of this research program include:

- building global and regional understanding of current trends in diets and dietary quality and their main drivers; and evaluating their health, economic, and social consequences
- developing and testing tools to measure diet quality, and including diet quality concerns in poverty measures
- articulating effective policies and interventions to improve dietary quality among the poor; reduce food insecurity and malnutrition, and redirect the nutrition transition toward healthier outcomes.

HIV/AIDS and Food and Nutrition Security

Worldwide, the majority of people affected by HIV/AIDS work in agriculture. When farmers fall ill, the ability of households and communities to feed themselves is jeopardized, particularly if they are poor. People living with AIDS, however, need even more food and better nutrition than before: HIV infection raises an individual's energy requirements by up to 30 percent.

This research program explores these and other complex links between HIV/AIDS and rural livelihoods using an HIV/AIDS “lens” to see how we can best:

- understand how food and nutrition policies and programs can contribute to the prevention, care, treatment, and mitigation of HIV/AIDS
- strengthen research-policy networks on HIV/AIDS, rural livelihoods, and food security globally
- scale up policy and program successes in both Africa and Asia.

Policy Processes in Food Security and Nutrition

We know a great deal about how to increase food security and reduce malnutrition. Yet a large gap remains between knowledge and action, leaving millions hungry and malnourished. Often food security or nutrition issues do not get onto the policy agenda, or when they do, policies are not implemented. Why not? Under what conditions are these issues more likely to be addressed?

This program breaks ground conceptually by placing science and knowledge within their social and political context. It will break ground methodologically by actively engaging policymakers and other stakeholders in the research process, encouraging analysis as information is gathered and decisions are made.

This new research program has the following objectives:

- to explore how political, economic, and social factors define problems and shape alternatives and outcomes
- to improve our understanding of the interaction of science, knowledge, values, politics, and other factors in the policy process
- to increase the relevance of IFPRI's research by asking the right questions, engaging the relevant policy actors, and improving policy forums and the quality of debate.



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