

Agriculture for Nutrition in Afghanistan Stakeholder Consultation

Press Release, 25 April ,2016

General summary

For centuries agriculture has been the mainstay of the Afghan society. While wheat is the principal food crop, fruits and nuts and livestock products such as wool have played a large part in subsistence, in local marketed production, and in exports.

The national rate of child malnutrition has reduced from a national level of more than 60% stunting recorded in 2003/04 (NRVA Data - National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment data published by Central Statistics Organisation, Afghanistan) to about 40% in 2011/12 (NRVA data), but high levels of hunger and micronutrient deficiencies persist.

Much attention is given in humanitarian work to therapeutic approaches to improving the nutrition of vulnerable groups, but the contribution of agricultural development and the food system to improving rural and urban diets also needs to be increased.

Twenty-five stakeholders from several provinces across Afghanistan came together to discuss initial research findings that explores ways to use agriculture to reduce malnutrition in Afghanistan. The meeting in Kabul on April 25th strengthened understanding in relation to agriculture and nutrition in the Afghan policy environment.

Participants included representatives from Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) amongst representatives from the CEO's Office, and other relevant Ministries from four provinces. Country representatives from FAO, WFP, BRAC and Save the Children as well as civil society organisations and media participated.

The importance of better communication between the various provinces and Kabul was emphasised, as was the need for education on good nutrition through various routes from school curriculum to television programmes. A multisectoral approach to address the problem of undernutrition was largely agreed upon that would encompass numerous factors ranging from infrastructure, water scarcity, access to markets, and microfinance.

The importance of the role of women in agriculture and nutrition process, and the way media should support nutrition awareness in Afghanistan were discussed at large.

Policy awareness and dissemination, as well as multi-sectoral coordination and implementation of these policies were emphasised as a vital link to tackling undernutrition in the provinces.

“There’s a lot of work being done on food security, i.e. hunger, but hunger is not same as malnutrition. We need to address malnutrition as well as hunger.”



Participants at the consultation event take part in the discussion at the Serena Hotel in Kabul, Afghanistan on Monday, 25 April 2016.