

The Rutgers University Policy Research Consortium

Policy Change for Improved Nutrition: Summary of Lessons Learned

Target Countries: Malawi, Rwanda, Africa (all countries), Global
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Increased agricultural productivity is insufficient

- Agricultural policies that only promote productivity to increase household income and economic growth have been important in improving nutrition and health outcomes, but not sufficient particularly for children.
- Agricultural growth policies do not address dietary diversity needs for healthy outcomes.
- Stakeholders should see rural markets as places to sell excess production and to purchase a safe quality diet.

Case studies reveal need for change

- It unclear if rural food markets can supply diverse and nutritious foods at affordable prices on a consistent basis.
- Consumer demand for safe nutritious diverse diets will increase only if consumers understand the benefits to their health and have the opportunity to purchase them.
- It is difficult to measure the full impact uninspected food plays in child development outcomes but is likely negative. A deeper dive is needed to reduce hidden characteristics of food from rural markets. .

Nutrition depends on whole diets and food systems

- Previous strategies have focused on basic staples and value chains for specific products, but health outcomes depend on overall diet quality from both own-production and purchased foods.
- Building competitive rural markets for safe, diverse foods allows farmers to complement own production with purchases and sales.

Market research reveals systemic opportunities

- Developing markets for diverse foods can lower prices and create nonfarm jobs.
- Educating the entire value chain and consumers on food safety, dietary diversity, and the impact on health will increase consumer demand for high quality diverse foods.
- Enacting and enforcing grades and standards will transform markets and market opportunities including International trade.
- Agricultural and nutrition policy will stimulate public and private investments to make high-quality diets affordable for the poor.

Nutrient contents of premixed infant foods differ from labeled values and child needs, due to lack of standards

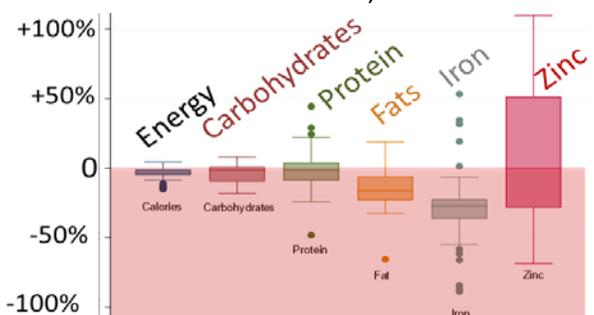


Figure 1: Nutrient test results for 94 samples from 8 brands of premixed cereals in Malawi (July 2018)

The cost of a nutritious diet relative to subsistence calories reveals food system performance

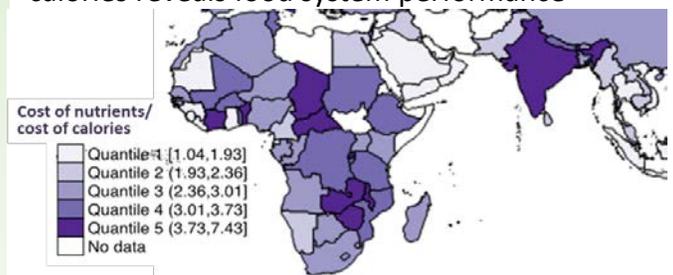


Figure 2: Ratio of cost for nutrient adequacy to cost of calories for 158 countries in 2011, for an adult woman

Citations

For nutritional value of packaged infant foods in Malawi:

Gilbert, Rachel; Binita Subedi; Jessica Wallingford; Norbert Wilson and William A. Masters . 2019. Nutrient and mycotoxin content of commercially-sold premixed infant cereals in Malawi. MaSSP Working Paper 28. Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).
<https://doi.org/10.2499/p15738coll2.133335>

For nutritious diet costs versus subsistence calories, worldwide:

Alemu, R, Y Bai, S Block, D Headey and WA Masters. 2019. Cost and affordability of nutritious diets at retail prices: Evidence from 744 foods in 159 countries, Tufts University Department of Economics Working Paper.
<https://ase.tufts.edu/economics/documents/papers/2019/mastersCostAffordability.pdf>

For other text:

Weatherspoon, D.D., Miller, S., Ngabitsinze, J.C., Weatherspoon, L.J. and Oehmke, J.F., 2019. Stunting, food security, markets and food policy in Rwanda. *BMC Public Health*, 19(1), p.882. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s12889-019-7208-0>