

A new paradigm for world agriculture:
meeting human needs: productive,
sustainable, nutritious.

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A new paradigm for world agriculture: meeting human needs: Productive, sustainable, nutritious

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Abstract

Micronutrient malnutrition ('Hidden Hunger') now afflicts over two billion people worldwide, resulting in poor health, low worker productivity, high rates of mortality and morbidity, increased rates of chronic diseases (coronary heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes), and permanent impairment of cognitive abilities of infants born to micronutrient-deficient mothers. The consequences of food system failures include lethargic national development efforts, continued high population growth rates, and a vicious cycle of poverty for massive numbers of underprivileged people in all nations. Our food systems are failing us globally by not providing enough balanced nutrient output to meet all the nutritional needs of every person, especially resource-poor women, infants and children in developing countries. Agriculture is partly responsible because it has never held nutrient output as an explicit goal of its production systems. Indeed, many

agricultural policies have fostered a decline in nutrition and diet diversity for the poor in many countries. Nutrition and health communities are also partly responsible because they have never considered using agriculture as a primary tool in their programs directed at alleviating poor nutrition and ill health globally. Now is the time for a new paradigm for agriculture and nutrition. We must consider ways in which agriculture can contribute to finding sustainable solutions to food system failures through holistic food-based system approaches, thereby closely linking agricultural production to improving human health, livelihood and well being. Such action will stimulate support for agricultural research in many developed countries because it addresses consumer issues as well as agricultural production issues and is, therefore, politically supportable.



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Keywords

Sustainable agriculture; Human nutrition; Micronutrients; Malnutrition; Development; Health

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