

**ASSURING FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY IN AFRICA BY 2020:
Prioritizing Action, Strengthening Actors, and Facilitating Partnerships**
April 1–3, 2004, Kampala, Uganda

SUMMARY NOTE

Parallel Session: **Implementing Action in Key Areas: Improving Nutrition and Health**

Panelist: *Amadou Kanouté*, Regional Director, Office for Africa, Consumers
International, Zimbabwe

Title: **Improving Nutrition and Health: How African Consumer Concerns Can
Be Effectively Heard and Addressed in Order to Improve Food and
Nutrition Security**

Date: April 2, 2004

About Consumers International and the Eight Consumer Rights

1. **ISSUES**

- a. ***Food insecurity*** — factors causing insecurity. Hunger has a dozen of fathers: geographic access; financial access; social factors; distribution inefficiencies; politics (governance); civil wars/internal strife; imbalance in land distribution (idle land lying waste); natural disasters (drought, floods, landslides, etc.); unfavorable international trade rules and regulations (e.g., protectionist tendencies, lack of access to markets, subsidies, over-production, price volatility); economic development policies (e.g., rural development and agriculture not prioritized in development policies; structural adjustment programs); high cost of agricultural production inputs; population pressure; and inadequate and inappropriate technologies.
- b. ***Poor nutrition*** — a concern in both developed and developing economies:

developed countries — too much food and obesity

developing countries — too little food and malnutrition

2. **CONSUMER CONCERNS**

- ***Trade policies and practices that further compromise African food production and markets:***
 - Export subsidies in the North
 - Lack of effective support to local production (R&D private, IPRs, constraints on subsidies and extension support and input to farmers, strategic reserves dismantled)
 - SPS and TBT (cases of protectionist standards)
 - Food aid (not demand driven, tied, not targeted, not adapted to local consumption habits, undermines local production capacity and markets)
 - Corporate control of the food chain; modeling of consumer choice
 - Inappropriate pricing of food products
- ***Agricultural policies and production models that are not sustainable:***
 - Six criteria¹ help in determining sustainability: demand-led, site specific, poverty focused, cost effective, environmentally, and institutionally sustainable.
- ***Models of consumption that exacerbate food insecurity:***
 - “The bread from Dakar is better” syndrome; fast foods; foreign-based food products heavily advertised against indigenous foods; food aid not culturally adapted; Dumping of food in environments marked by poverty

3. **ADDRESSING CONSUMER CONCERNS**

¹ Aaron de Grasi, “Genetically modified crops and sustainable poverty alleviation in Sub-Saharan Africa,” June 2003.

CI Tackling Poor Nutrition:

- ***Policy formulation level:***
 - Codex Alimentarius/Regional Codex Commission (food standards: sardines, peanuts, lobbying for Safety, Labeling, Traceability, and Liability)
 - WHO (sugar/obesity campaign)
 - PRSPs and Trade agreements to include consumer protection clause (UE-ACP Article 51 on consumer health and dumping of substandard food on African markets)
- ***Grassroots level:***
 - Consumer education and information (nutritional facts, informative labeling, street vended food, hygiene practices/access to water and sanitation)
 - Support women's groups small-scale agricultural production schemes (hydroponics nutritional gardens in Senegal, create market for local goods: ASDEC/ENDA bio-market)

CI Tackling Food Insecurity:

- ***Policy Dialogue***
 - Research on and advocate for sustainable and more appropriate agricultural models of production at national and global levels (NERICA)
 - Lobby main donor countries to break structures of food aid dependency (Zambia and GM food aid)
 - Alert governments on negative impacts of economic policies (elimination of subsidies on agricultural inputs in Ghana, ADMARC in Malawi)
 - Lobby and advocate for fairer trade rules at global level (developed countries domestic agricultural support and dumping of goods at below costs of production, the "peace clause," support to allow developing countries policy to protect small farmers and food security crops from dumping)
- ***Grassroots level***
 - Consumer buying clubs in Zimbabwe (spur competition, reduce food chain for a fair and transparent marketplace), hydroponics garden in Senegal
 - Consumer education

4. **WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE FOR CONSUMER CONCERNS TO BE HEARD AND ADDRESSED**

- Facilitate and enhance policy dialogue on economic issues with civil society both at national level and global level for development of pro-poor policies;
- Development of standards should be more inclusive and more transparent;
- Put in place mechanisms for funding effective consumer representation in decisionmaking;
- Implementation of the African Union Model law on biotechnology and biosafety and the biosafety regulations as adopted at the latest MOP of the Cartagena protocol;
- Adoption of precautionary approach until reasonable level of safety and environmental sustainability is proven in any new food technology;
- Support and replicate wherever possible grassroots activities run by CSOs in food and nutrition for the emergence of critical consumers and economic agents who have a say on policies formulated for them.

Note: This note has not been edited. The views expressed in this summary note are those of the author and are not necessarily endorsed by or representative of IFPRI or of the cosponsoring or supporting organizations.