

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

**SUMMARY NOTE**

**Plenary Panel:**        **Implementing Action**

**Chair**                    *Courage Quashigah*, Minister of Food and Agriculture, Ghana

**Date:**                    April 2, 2004

Ladies and Gentlemen, this morning we are going to listen to three speakers dilating on the topics: (a) “Strategies for improving food and nutrition security in Africa,” (b) “Technological options for Africa’s small-scale farmers,” and (c) “Implementing action to reduce hunger: Learning from Mali’s Experiences.”

Yesterday, it was clear that we cannot, in the near future, fade out the over 96% of farmers operating on a small-scale in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In spite of the fact that they produce the bulk of our food needs, the majority of them are still poor. And if we admit that hunger is one of the most visible consequences of poverty, then our pro-poor development strategies must be looking at the technological options we can present to them.

Malnutrition is also a common future among them since they do not have the means to introduce the required balance into their nutritional diet.

Nutrition is not a new element being introduced into food security. It has always been a part of many definitions of food security.

The World Food Summit in Rome in 1997 agreed that “food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient nutrition and safe food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”

The Ghana Food and Agricultural Sector Development Policy (FASDEP) document defines Food Security as “good quality, nutritious food, hygienically packaged, and attractively presented; available in sufficient quantities all year round; located at the appropriate places at affordable prices.”

Most people, however, continue to interpret the definition in terms of food sufficiency and access to it in terms of location and purchasing power.

There is a heightening awareness now that malnutrition, particular vitamins and mineral deficiencies, are causing a range of health problems ranging from weak immune system, anemia, and blindness to lower IQs.

Eating is not just feeling the stomach with any food but more importantly the food must have the right balance of the carbohydrates, proteins, lipids, vitamins, minerals, and water to enhance growth, development, and maintenance of the body.

Nutrition is aptly defined by the Council on Food and Nutrition of the American Medical Association as “the science of food, the nutrients, and substances therein, their action, interaction, and balance in relation to health and disease, and the process by which the organism ingests, digests, absorbs, transports, utilizes, and excretes food substances.”

This is your LIFE OR DEATH and it must take a center stage when we are talking about food security.

Nutrition in food security is like leadership in management. You ignore leadership, you write your bankruptcy report; you ignore nutrition, you sign your death warrant. You should now realize that food surplus will not automatically translate into achieving food security.

I am particularly happy that nutrition has finally been pulled out from its hiding place into the full glare of discussions, because that is precisely where the greatest difficulty is and will make it impossible for any country to achieve 100% food security.

I am not surprised we had difficulty in expressing our opinions on the two issues yesterday, particularly nutrition.

Using the Ghanaian definition, you could actually score points over 100 for each element in the definition and strike a simple average to tell you the level of food security attained at anytime in point (Ghana, Burkina Faso, Singapore).

We all have to take some drastic measures to ensure that the generations behind us are well nourished so they can develop into the strong, healthy, and intelligent manpower required to carry on the fight against poverty and hunger.

In recognition of the importance of nutrition and yet criminally ignored particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, I have decided to set up working group comprising research scientists, nutritionists in the health and education services, food processors, agriculturists, etc. to expose the nutritional values of our local foods and compose Nutritious Diet Menu for our schools in Ghana using our local food items, which we shall enforce to improve the feeding programme of our children.

Remember that this will increase the demand for local food items and create the much-needed ready market for our farmers.

Thank you.

May I now introduce the speakers and allow them to take turn to speak to us.

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