

COMMENTARY

The Real Cost of Malnutrition



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The recently concluded African Green Revolution Forum (AGRF) September 5-9, 2016, created a buzz in the agriculture and agribusiness sector on the continent. The forum saw commitments made and private as well as public sectors and other members i.e. civil society congregate to discuss the future and impact (actual and potential) of agriculture and agribusiness. Alongside the forum, the Global Panel on Malnutrition, was meeting on the sidelines to launch the report on “The cost of Malnutrition” directed at both policy as well as various players in the nutrition space.

“The estimated impact on the global economy could be as high as US\$3.5 trillion per year, or US\$500 per individual”¹. These enormous costs result from economic growth foregone and lost investments in human capital associated with preventable child deaths, as well as premature adult mortality linked to diet-related non-communicable diseases.

The brief highlights that adult earnings are reduced by 2.4% for every 1% loss in potential attained height. Further costs are incurred through impaired learning, poor school performance, compromised adult labour productivity, and increased health care costs. Over-nutrition also bears a significant cost; at least 2.6 million people die each year as a result of being overweight or obese.

The need for action

Sustained reductions in malnutrition will contribute significantly to poverty alleviation and government budgetary savings. It is therefore vital that addressing all forms of malnutrition becomes a top policy and private sector priority hence Nutribisc being identified as one of the contributors towards eradicating malnutrition especially stunting by processing high protein, high energy biscuits out of fish (rich in **zinc**, **iron** and **calcium** due to its fortification by natural ingredients) was invited to the launch. Claudius Kurtna, and Florence Mkombola founders of Nutribisc shared their commitment to continue fighting this vice that robs Africa of its “**grey matter**” by constantly innovating

to provide the mass market with healthy and nutritious products that would improve the health condition of masses.

Evidence reveals the impressive economic benefits of investment associated with actions to improve food systems, diets and nutrition worldwide; it is estimated that a US\$18 return is achieved from every US\$1 invested in reducing wasting and stunting. Policymakers were called upon to make decisions based on the known cost-effectiveness of immediate actions, bearing in mind future accrued costs if appropriate actions are delayed.

“Although the price of addressing malnutrition can be huge, evidence shows that the cost of doing nothing is immeasurably greater,” states Prof K. Srinath Reddy, President of the Public Health Foundation of India, and Global Panel Member.

Reference:

1. Glopan
<http://www.glopan.org/sites/default/files/pictures/CostOfMalnutrition.pdf>