

## Commentary

### A Special Issue of the African Journal of Food, Agriculture, Nutrition and Development (AJFAND)



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Once in a while we are given the opportunity to witness the kind of collaborative scholarship, use of contemporary technologies, and coordinated international participation to consolidate the state of the art, the status of public policy, and the production of guidance for both research and policy development. It has been my pleasure to see such a concerted effort come to fruition from our colleagues at the School of Public Health, University of Ghana-Legon during the global COVID-19 pandemic. My first impression was, "What a good idea!"

The role of academic leadership in public health includes the normal foci of teaching and research. In addition, however, academics must take a moment periodically to take stock of the state of knowledge and practice. We need to examine government policies directing efforts to combat malnutrition, improve population nutrition status, or to address emerging nutrition-related public health problems. Without taking stock of where we are it is difficult to know where we need to go. Because public health research, including populations and whole communities, is too rarely replicated, as is the norm in laboratory-based research, it is less common to step back and take a cumulative broad view and to identify cutting edge questions that might direct public policy and program design.

Prof. Richmond Aryeetey has assembled thirteen contributions ranging from health and nutrition education, to public attitudes, food availability, barriers to food policy implementation, food packaging and safety, unhealthy lifestyle-nutrition implications on population health, dietary guidelines and analysis of such policies with recommendations for the future. The team includes 29 contributing authors from 5 universities. The team is multi-disciplinary, reflecting the reality of nutrition in society. The team represents Ghana, the UK and Canada, also reflecting the base of inquiry and distribution of scientific talent.

This special issue accomplishes the task of taking stock for Ghana's Ministry of Health program and policy leadership in a concise and scholarly way that is very infrequently provided to government leadership or to academic colleagues and practitioners. It is now up to other African nations to take up the challenge to provide such academic teams with the resources to take stock too. With such summary information we can anticipate step-increases in nutritional status, and finding new ways to address traditional issues such as kwashiorkor, marasmus, and wasting. We can then design and mount new programs and policies to combat emerging nutrition-related anemias, obesity, and diabetes. Ghana, and Africa have a New Year's gift in this special issue that offers a way forward for the benefit of all the people we serve.