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NEPAL TO HOST AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, HEALTH SCIENTIFIC SYMPOSIUM & ACADEMY WEEK

KATHMANDU, JULY 2017: Leading thinkers in research and policy from around the world convene in Kathmandu from July 9-13 to dialogue on agriculture, food and nutrition security and health-related challenges plaguing millions. *The Agriculture, Nutrition, Health Scientific Symposium & Academy Week* is a joint venture between the [Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Nutrition and the Agriculture, Nutrition & Health \(ANH\) Academy](#), funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and UK Aid from UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID), respectively. The event provides a global forum for connecting researchers and key decision-makers, enabling mutual learning and the sharing of cutting-edge, innovative research.

The challenge is immense: an average 40% of children under the age of five in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan are classified as being stunted, whilst in Nepal has over ten percent of this age group that suffer from wasting (Sources: NNS-2013 Afghanistan; DHS-2011 Bangladesh; NNS-2011 Pakistan; NFHS 2015-16 India; DHS 2016 Nepal Preliminary report).

The alarming undernutrition statistics are in stark contrast to the wider Asia region figures that show almost half of the world's children population under the age of five living with obesity (WHO, 2016). In Nepal, a similar disparity exists, where nearly 20% of women of reproductive age are underweight whilst at the same time a similar proportion are overweight or obese (DHS, 2016 Preliminary report). These emerging double burdens of malnutrition are a global phenomenon and are certainly not confined to Asia alone. They can be found in many places across the world, including Africa, Central and South America, and the Middle East -hence the urgent need for immediate and innovative solutions.

Diet-related chronic diseases are rising steadily even in low- and middle-income countries where dietary inadequacy and undernutrition still persist. Increased complexity in food systems, reflecting different models of economic development, growing urbanization, lifestyle changes, and evolving consumption patterns add to the stress on farming systems. Thus, to realize the Sustainable Development Goals agenda will require in-depth understanding and leveraging of linkages between agriculture, nutrition, and health.

Linking agriculture, nutrition and health – need of the hour: With agriculture representing large proportions of GDP in many low- and middle-income countries (33% in Nepal and 25% in Pakistan)—linkages are critical to issues that include availability and affordability of nutritious foods, health and nutrition status of women and children, and purchasing power of the entire country ([World Bank, 2017](#)).

Both Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Nutrition and Agriculture, Nutrition & Health (ANH) Academy were established to better respond to these pressing challenges by delivering events and evidence needed to guide policy actions that will increase agricultural productivity, enhance food value chains, and improve diets to achieve measurable outcomes in nutrition.

As **Mr. Atmaram Pandey**, Former Secretary of the Government of Nepal points out, *“The symposium has connected nutrition agenda with agriculture. The contribution the symposium has made in food and dietary systems is significant. The event has been bringing out evidence-based research and has contributed a lot in reaching knowledge in the field of nutrition, while Nepal’s Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Plan II is in drafting phases and the country is moving to a federalist structure. The symposium’s role seems pivotal in strengthening the nutritional status in both landmarks”.*

M S Swaminathan, Founder-Chairman MSSRF India, & LANSAs Consortium Advisory Group member, on Overcoming the South Asian Enigma in the Prevalence of Hunger and Malnutrition:

“Countries in South Asia have made impressive progress in enhancing agricultural production and productivity; nevertheless, there is still an unacceptable extent of hunger and malnutrition, particularly among women and children. India, for example, is generally referred to as a ‘Green Revolution country’, but occupies a low position of 97 out of 118 in IFPRI’s Global Hunger Index. Several steps have been taken by countries in South Asia including Nepal to address this problem - therefore, the question arises on what is missing in the ‘freedom from hunger’ strategy?”

It is now realised that an important missing factor is the linkage between agriculture, nutrition and health. By mainstreaming nutrition in farming systems, it will be possible to ensure not only adequate food, but nutritious food to the population. Another critical missing factor is the lack of recognition of women as farmers. While feminisation of agriculture is acknowledged, women farmers lack the necessary entitlements and support, both for farming and for fulfilling their domestic and care responsibilities effectively. Addressing these missing links is a major goal of LANSAs programme.

The ANH Conference will provide an important opportunity for exchanging experiences among countries and for formulating a strategy for providing socially appropriate agricultural remedies for the major nutritional maladies prevailing in each South Asia country through a farmer-centric approach. It can thus help purchase time in overcoming the present enigma.”

Programme

Over the course of three days the global research community will share evidence on topics ranging from climate, seasonality and environmental change, to dietary transitions, gender and equity, with the aim of developing stronger collaborations and more robust policies to reduce agricultural vulnerability and combat the persistent threat of malnutrition in all its forms. More info attached.

-ENDS-

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Further information – including speaker bios, presentations, session agendas, videos and blogs from organisers and participants can be found on: www.nutritioninnovationlab.org and www.ANH-Academy.org

About

The ANH Academy Week is an annual event open to the global research community, which expands on the successful history of events and conferences co-hosted by the [Leverhulme Centre for Integrative Research on Agriculture and Health \(LCIRAH\)](#) and the [CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health \(A4NH\)](#), alongside [Innovative Methods and Metrics for Agriculture and Nutrition Action \(IMMANA\)](#).

The Nutrition Innovation Lab's annual scientific symposium has been a forum for Nepali scientists to present research on nutrition, agriculture and health and to network and interact with their peers from Nepal and beyond. The annual symposia, supported by USAID and held since 2013, has been organized by [Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health](#) and the [Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, Tufts University](#) with co-hosts the [Institute of Medicine, Tribhuvan University \(IOM\), Nepal Agricultural Research Council \(NARC\)](#) and the [Nepali Technical Assistance Group \(NTAG\)](#).

The goal each year has been to facilitate the sharing and learning of evidence on linkages between agriculture and food systems for improved nutrition and health and linkages and disconnects along the agriculture-nutrition pathway. Additional support and collaboration in delivering the event comes from the [Leveraging Agriculture for Nutrition in South Asia \(LANSA\)](#) research programme.