**Q&A Session: NIPN Webinar on Promoting Sustainable and Healthy Diets: The Role of National Public Health Institutes**

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| **Presenter: Dr. Helle Margret Meltzer, Senior Researcher, Norwegian Institute of Public Health** **Panelists: 1. Dr. Line Småstuen Haug, Senior Scientist at the Department of Food Safety, Norwegian Institute of Public health** **2. Dr. Yewelsew Abebe, PhD in Nutrition, Freelance Consultant** |
| **Question** | **Answer** |
| Genetically Modified Crop is important for increase in production as a result it is important to maintain food security and sustainability. But it has its own side effect for health. What is your suggestion for this scenario? | I have to say that I'm not an expert in GMOs, but certainly, I think this is relevant. When we have climate change, that could be a positive aspect of getting more or developing more robust plants. But of course, we need to ensure that the foods are safe. So, we shouldn't just rush for genetic modifications, but we need to be sure that the plants are safe. It is relevant if we can increase production by making more robust plants. So far, no one has prohibited the growth of genetically modified organisms.We will probably need to use this possibility in the future, but we need to ensure that it's still safe. Let's see what the future brings.  |
| Are you measuring the quality of food based on nutrient density? If not, would this be of interest? We are seeing large variation in the content of minerals and phytonutrients of the same crops depending on how they are grown. I have seen study paper on reversing Diabetes 2 comparing low quality against high quality vegetable diets over 12-week period. Lead researcher suggest values of bitter compounds (polyphenols, anti-oxidants, etc.) of high interest and worth more investigation. | When measuring the quality of food and the content of the separate foods, we are not differentiating on crops and various cultivars; we use food tables of Norway. They operate with the average values of all foods we have. So, wheat has an average content of various nutrients. For soy, beans, and others, we could not differentiate; that would be for a research project that the nutrient content of a certain food isn't the same from farm to farm. The crop can change depending on the soil and the special cultivar. So, when we work with the dietary recommendations, we cannot take that into consideration, which would be for research.**Additional explanation from the participant** I'm involved in a scanner or handheld tools that can measure the quality of foods. When there's a significant difference in that variation, the idea of monitoring food quality at the point of purchase or as it's growing offers valuable thoughts of the world of nutrition recommending healthy foods and what we are seeing. The research being done open source is that well-grown food that uses regenerative practices was built up in the soil of more carbon and microbes, so we're seeing more biodiversity. This is leading to improvements in crop nutritional values. So, suppose we had a tool for measuring the quality of that food, based on the nutritional values. What we're doing is ensuring that the food has the highest quality to give the maximum potential for making people healthy—at the same time, knowing that with creating a demand for their food to be grown regeneratively. So, I see this as a central piece of the jigsaw of simultaneously promoting good nutrition and encouraging sustainability.In our study, the crops are sampled for nutrients and the soil they're grown in is being sampled simultaneously. So, we've got this holistic data. Putting the two together, the soil and the crops will show the bigger picture. |
| How do we achieve the aim of the EFBDG in terms of insuring healthy diet in Ethiopian context as we know that the food market inflation is increasing from day to day and the consumers’ purchasing power is decreasing oppositely? | Yes, it's obvious food prices are extremely high in our situation. But if you have seen the eleven messages, seven of the food-related messages are from locally available items. The messages are carefully tailored; for example, vegetables may be lacking, or when we take holidays, we can have meat or different types of animal source foods from one food group. So, the thing is that we want to promote the awareness that diversity means not only foods with high cost. Simply from what we have, the family can modify and can have kind of a better food service, considering the benefits. So, in order to promote that, the guideline is carefully prepared. The cost is also calculated in the diet modeling work as much as the lowest cost possible. So, the guideline does not ask for extra but can be used as an advocacy tool. So, it can be used wisely as an advocacy tool. A government organization that knew about this guideline was asking me; she took the message without modifying that much the budget. The feeding program for the children in the institution was much improved because when we simply evaluated it, it was 90% from one food group, carbohydrates, then they changed it to other expenses. |
| General recommendations on the need for appropriate processing of cereals and legumes to improve bioavailability of nutrients and reducing antinutrients could have additional importance too. | Yes, the guideline already addresses in the tips. For example, when you prepare the labels, you know soaking, roasting, and so on as much as possible, those gaps which are known in society are addressed. For example, for the pastoralist, a new guideline will be adapted and this one is for the general population. I think it was addressed, but it can always be modified.  |
| How are the research and academic institutions playing their role in the piloting implementation of the FBDG? | Setting up this center is one important step towards getting on with the implementation of the food based dietary guidelines (FBDG). We hope that the center can contribute to getting things out in practice and also they may conduct a study if people are actually following the guidelines and see how this works. |
| Can you share experiences/recommendations/approaches of multi-sectoral institutionalization and implementation of FBDG in sector plans and budgets for sustainable results? FBDG implementation can be hampered by insufficient production of certain food groups (Agri sector), year-round availability and access due to seasonality or even affordability (Agriculture, trade, industry, water, finance, etc..) or even emergencies (drought, conflict). | To be honest, we haven't been too good at it up through these 40 years since 1980, when we started having Nordic dietary guidelines. Within the countries, there can be tension between the various interest groups and stakeholders. Indeed, the tension between different governmental agencies exists because agricultural groups tend to want to have a business as usual. At the same time, the health and nutrition groups want things to change to improve nutrition. So, I don't have a silver bullet answer for how to make all these different stakeholders collaborate. There are many challenges along the road to make all the government agencies and stakeholders collaborate and work towards the same goal. |