



### Summary

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 2015, the Netherlands Working Group on Nutrition organized a kick-off event for 'Scaling up Dutch efforts for Global Nutrition'. It included the Dutch launch of the Global Nutrition Report 2014 by Lawrence Haddad (International Food Policy Research Institute), a key note speech by Reina Buijs (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Deputy Director-General for International Cooperation) and a lively 'House of Commons' session in which participants debated various options to scale up Dutch efforts towards achieving nutrition security.

Haddad urged the Dutch nutrition community to actively lobby to get nutrition on political agendas and in the SDG's thereby stressing the cross disciplinary nature and importance of nutrition and its specific impact on agricultural and economic development. To achieve this, the nutrition community should improve its political, lobbying and advocacy efforts and emphasize the importance of nutrition. Besides the obvious health reasons, economic benefits that result from investments in nutrition are evident. To integrate nutrition in various sectors, including the agricultural and private sector, the profit oriented approaches of these sectors should be understood.

Specific entry points can be identified to 'sneak in' nutrition, including in resilience, climate change and crop diversification. Furthermore, the high returns from investing in nutrition should be emphasized: for every \$ invested, \$16 will be returned, mostly through health gains and gains in productivity. Although improvements in the field of nutrition show results rather gradually, there are examples of countries that have made spectacular improvements as a result of modest interventions in different areas, for example the region Maharashtra in India, where stunting fell from 37 to 24% in 7 years. These modest interventions included economic growth leading to poverty reduction, nutrition and health missions leading to improved program performance and recruitment of additional nutrition staff leading to modest financial investments in nutrition.

Mrs. Reina Buijs from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs explained the current role and policy of the Dutch Government concerning global food security. ([Click here](#) for the policy letter). She emphasized the 'Dutch Diamond Approach' and the need to co-operate with the agricultural departments and private sector, linking government, private sector, NGO's and knowledge institutes. Focus on malnutrition is clearly mentioned, over-nutrition is still not specifically included in the recent policy letter.



During the debate it became apparent that opinions on approaches to improve nutrition were overall similar but partly dispersed. It was argued by some that underlying, systemic problems would be overlooked if the Dutch nutrition community would only focus on the first 1000 days. Others commented that a focus on the first 1000 days does imply tackling some of the most important underlying causes. Another point of dis-consensus concerned food fortification. Some considered it a 'far too limited' approach, changing the behavior of governments and households was for example considered more important. Others argued food fortification did not exclude other focuses, but could 'buy time'. These dispersed areas should be further explored to identify what approach to take. The vast majority agreed that investments from the Dutch government in nutrition should at least triple.

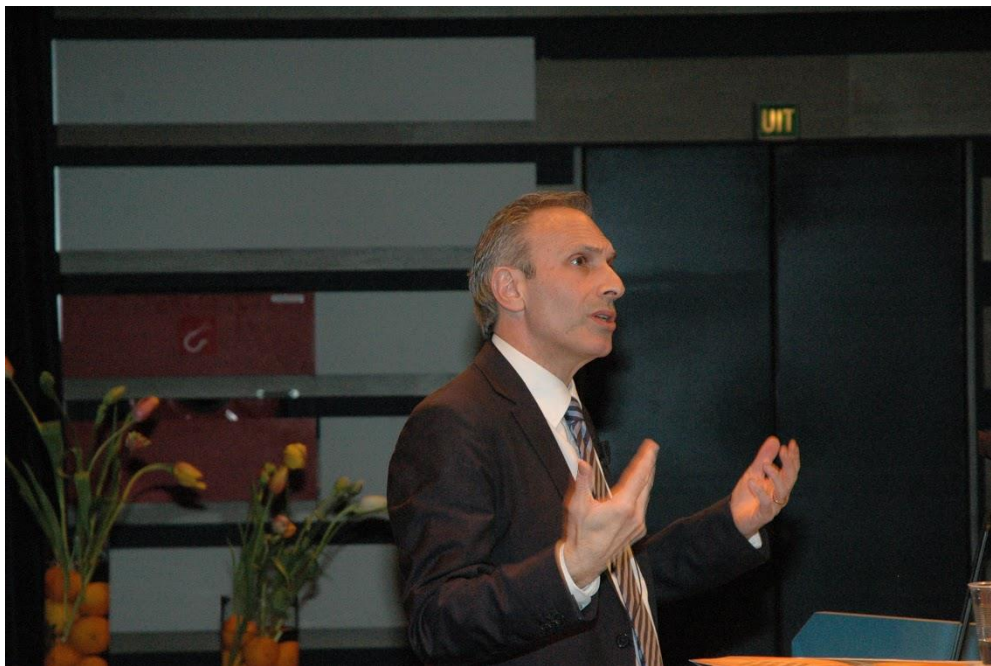
Haddad concluded that the international nutrition community has shown considerable progress and shared his appreciation of the multi-stakeholder participation and evidence based nature of in this debate.

## Key speakers (main conclusions)

### Global Nutrition Report 2014

#### Prof. Lawrence Haddad

The Global Nutrition Report 2014 is intended to be a readable and practical report for nutrition champions, policy practitioners and nutrition advocates. We tried to do three things: assess the process of improving nutrition, ascertain new areas for action, and strengthen our accountability in nutrition. Especially the latter is important as it is easy to free ride but on the other hand difficult to see the symptoms of improved nutrition on the short term. The GNR 2014 has been compiled by a stakeholder group, with more than 60 authors contributing and over 80 indicators in 193 countries were used.



The key messages of the report for the Netherlands are:

1. Nutrition is a foundation for the SDG's. *Currently nutrition is mentioned only once as SDG, which reflects the lack of political commitment; nutrition professionals should argue for mainstreaming of nutrition in other SDGs and indicators as well.*
2. Malnutrition is a concern for all countries in the world. Looking at three forms of malnutrition (stunting, anemia and overweight) of the 122 countries for which we have comparable data, 102 countries have 2 or more forms of malnutrition. China and Republic of Korea are the only two countries that are below the stated cutoffs for all three indicators.
3. Multiple burdens are the new normal.
4. Progress is slow globally but some individual countries are doing very well. *Progress is often the result of a combination of modest progress in economic growth, improved program performance, recruitment of nutrition staff and modest increases in nutrition spending.*

5. We need more ambition on targets.
6. Scaling up is more possible than ever before. *We need to scale up action, implementation and sensitization, and integrate nutrition in other sectors. We are not yet good at linking with other sectors. We need to clarify the importance and benefits of nutrition (as agriculture already has their hands full on improving production). There is money available in different sectors, e.g. in the agricultural sector, so there are a lot of opportunities as well.*
7. Nutrition accountability needs strengthening. *Currently accountability is weak. We need to know where the money is going and how we are going to track it.*

Statistics to remember and to be used to advocate for nutrition:

1. 45% of all child deaths under 5 years of age is a direct or indirect consequence of malnutrition. (Lancet series 2013)
2. Every \$1 invested in nutrition will yield a \$16 return. A rate of return that you will not find anywhere else.
3. Over-nutrition has a direct consequence on economic efficiency. Obesity eventually leads to increased absence of work, which is responsible for a 10% loss of the median income in the USA.

Various actors each have their role to play to scale up nutrition efforts. **Three area's for actions:** Government (nutrition commitments + increase ODA share to nutrition), Civil Society Organisations, and Business (improve data collection, improve coverage of interventions, thinking long term), and Research (close data gaps).

Recommended actions:

1. Embed nutrition more strongly in the SDG's.
2. Develop more ambitious targets for 2030.
3. Embrace the complexity of multiple burdens. *Complexity should not be feared, it is an opportunity to for alliances.*
4. Relentless focus on coverage of nutrition specific interventions; *you cannot hold the national government accountable for all issues related to nutrition, but you can account them for nutrition specific areas.*
5. Find resources outside the health sector for nutrition sensitive interventions; *there is money available in other sectors, e.g. in agriculture. However, we need to get better at convincing other sectors of the needs and benefits of nutrition.*
6. Invest in nutrition data revolution. *At least a fixed part should go to M&E.*
7. Be accountability champions. *Clarify to what standard you hold yourself and convince others to follow suit.*

## Policy on Food & Nutrition Security

### Mrs. Reina Buijs

We need everyone to work on better nutrition for the world. This necessity is reflected in our policy letter 'Netherlands' contribution to global food security' which places a heavy emphasis on the Dutch Diamond Approach, i.e. the collaboration of NGOs, private sector, government and knowledge institutions. The Dutch government calls on all relevant parties to eradicate hunger and works towards sustainable production in 2015.

The policy letter combines 3 objectives:

1. Eradicate existing hunger and malnutrition;
2. Promote inclusive and sustainable growth in the agricultural sector
3. Creating ecologically sustainable food systems.



The letter is not a blue print, but rather an indication of the direction and at the same time also the start of the process. It is also a means to test the Diamond Approach. We want to learn while working together. In this an open approach is needed to face the problems, especially when it comes to SRGR, health and nutrition. Malnutrition often has a female face and thus needs a focus on adolescent girls and young mothers or the cycle will repeat itself continuously. We also need to better understand beliefs and habits of people. Finally the nutrition community should realize that there will be no zero hunger unless we also link up with the private sector and understand their profit oriented perspectives on profit in the highly competitive sector.

Lastly we also need to focus on malnutrition in urban areas, since those areas normally do not have their own food production, or the production is limited to a few food items. The government is just one of the stakeholders. We hope that this meeting will have two outcomes. First, concrete suggestions and the creation of synergies. Second, the identification of areas that have not yet been addressed. The Ministry remains open for interaction with the different stakeholders and is looking forward to contribute to this challenge together.

## Q&A - Reina & Lawrence

- **Q1: Over-nutrition is of particular interest to the private sector, especially since government policies can conflict with the interests of the private sector. However, the topic is not addressed in the policy letter. Will this problem be addressed soon? And will this have repercussions for the Dutch Diamond?**
  - *Reina: Over-nutrition is not yet properly addressed in the policy letter, this needs attention. The topic is also on the plate of the Ministry of Health, Sports and Wellbeing. And yes, some policies aimed at tackling over-nutrition are against the interests of the private sector, but if we talk about nutrition we should also deal with unhealthy nutrition. It is closely related to our policy called 'Dialogue and Dissent': we need civil society to knock on our doors.*
  - *Lawrence: This is a big issue, but we all should face it, not just pointing at the private sector. For example signing a declaration when a project is funded by DFID. The key is transparency, which might be more difficult in the private sector.*
- **Q2: Most of the focus in government policies is on financing, especially private financing. How can you include earning capacity for the private sector? If the private sector does not have the perspective to earn, they will not come.**
  - *Lawrence: Unless there is a profit, businesses and farmers will not pay attention to nutrition. We need to find the overlap in good health, good profits and good environment. Most of us have no experience in the private sector, so it is hard to make a translation for the private sector. This will take time; but it is important that the public and the private sector make an effort to speak each other's language.*
  - *Reina: we should try to understand each other, government should aim at understanding farmers and the private sector. Very important also: work with female farmers! They want to properly feed their children and make a profit at the same time.*
- **Q3: How do we get nutrition on the agenda of the ministries of agriculture? Do we know what types of intervention are effective or not? And how far advanced is the knowledge base?**
  - *Lawrence: The nutrition sensitive knowledge base is not so good. What we need to do is find good entry points; e.g. resilience, climate change, disease and crop diversification. This is another open door to target nutrition. States who do invest in nutrition have a better impact on poverty compared to states that do not.*
  - *Example: HarvestPlus does not work directly with the harvest (productivity), instead it adds something to it (nutrients).*
  - *You have to integrate nutrition + nutrition specific behavior change components.*
  - *Reina: Much can be done by using common sense and see what is possible, just changing certain habits. Tackling the vicious cycle of bad sanitation-diarrhea-malnutrition for example is very important. Work with the fruits and vegetables sector is also an important option.*

### Visions and Debate (highlights/statement and possibly action points)

The latter part of the event consisted of a debate based on the “House of Commons” format, facilitated by a moderator from the DebatAcademie. A series of rather provocative propositions served to generate responses from the participants. The pros and cons of particular nutrition strategies and interventions and ideas regarding the best way for Dutch actors to scale up their nutrition efforts, were discussed.

*Note: the remarks included in the text boxes below, are those shared by individual participants and not necessarily those supported by the full audience or the organizing agencies.*



#### 1. We can end all forms of malnutrition by 2030

*Conclusion: most of the participants agreed that all forms of malnutrition can be eliminated by 2030.*

Agree	Disagree
It is a moral obligation to agree, it is a matter of wanting it.	It is an incredible complex system with many variables. We have to focus first on preventing people from dying because of malnutrition.
It takes only minor financial investment of 2 USD per capita to improve nutrition of individuals. Therefore it is definitely doable.	Technically we can do so, but it is not only a technical solution, it is politics. Lack of political commitment, unequal distribution of wealth and richness; these problems will not disappear by 2030.

2. We must only concentrate on investments in the first 1000 days window of a child

*Initially almost everyone disagrees; if the word 'only' is understood less static, most people do agree. Conclusion: no consent among the nutrition community; this area needs to be explored further e.g. the efficiency and effectiveness of interventions focused on the first 1000 days may be part of a future knowledge agenda.*

Agree	Disagree
The first 1000 days are an important formative period in children's and have a lasting impact.	You are too late if you focus on first 1000 days: you have to invest in mothers already prior to conception.
Focusing on this element of nutrition is the most efficient way to spend public money. For other nutrition problems there are other solutions.	Malnutrition is a symptom of other causes; money should be invested in these causes. The first 1000 days is tackling symptoms.
You will reach many people and it is one of the causes and includes maternal and pre/post-natal health care.	After the 1000 days problems can occur as well, for example obesity.
From a poverty perspective: a child does not have a choice at all.	By focusing on the first 1000 days we would miss out on the private sector for which infants are no consumer group.
Since people can take precautions against obesity during the first 1000 days, you are able to do something on the double burden as well.	
Focusing on the first 1000 days implies focusing on the whole household; they can be a target group for private sector.	





3. The Netherlands should prioritize investment in food fortification

*Conclusion: divided opinions on this matter, almost an ideologically based debate. We need to explore further on how to go about this issue, e.g. as part of the future knowledge agenda.*

Agree	Disagree
The Netherlands is preaching to other countries to include food fortification. Therefore we should take our own responsibilities as well.	Food fortification is not the most important element in improving nutrition.
Food fortification is a relatively easy and inexpensive way to improve nutrition.	Focusing on food fortification will result in excluding many of the partners in the private sector. Therefore this system will not work.
Children over six months old cannot get all the required nutrients from locally available foods. Therefore the Netherlands should help in this regard by means of food fortification.	This approach is far too limited. We need to focus on changing behavior of governments and households.
Food fortification is one of the many elements that supported improving nutrition in India. It is not bypassing other solutions, it is buying them time.	Two critical questions by Lawrence Haddad: does the Netherlands have an advantage over other countries in food fortification? And if we do prioritize food fortification, what would we leave out?
Food fortification has a very favorable cost/benefits ratio in comparison with other solutions.	It is a question of mutual accountability. If the Netherlands is not prioritizing food fortification, why should other countries? Credibility starts at home.
Bio-fortification is an important part of this statement. We can only agree to this if it includes this element.	

3. Improving nutritional outcomes along the agricultural supply chain is more important than increasing agricultural productivity

*Conclusion: no consensus yet on this matter. We need to explore direct or indirect investments and how to potentially link the two.*

Agree	Disagree
The world already produces more than enough food to feed the world. In the end, we need to invest in small scale locally oriented value chains for nutritious foods.	There are more options for increasing productivity: decreasing loss is also effectively increasing production.
Especially in developing countries there is a lot of potential improvement. For example, by linking the agricultural sector with the nutrition sector we can reduce malnutrition more effectively.	Variety in food is the key. The more food we produce the more variety we will have.

Just improving production is not enough. We can do much more to improve nutrition than just increasing the output per square hectare.	To keep food systems sustainable we need to improve production at a local level, specifically in regions where there is a shortage of food.
There is an ample amount of food and potential for food in the world. It should be possible at the global level to improve nutrition if we distribute it better.	

4. The access to the nutrition index should be used to name and shame companies with a low commitment to improving nutrition.

*Conclusion: the majority of the participants agreed with the statement. The next version of the global nutrition report will deal more with the private sector and should differentiate between types of private sector*

Agree	Disagree
If the report is not used to name and shame, then companies with a low commitment will not pay attention to it.	Companies that are scoring well will use the report as a positive reward and can name and shame others. It is not our role to use it in such a way.
There are plenty of examples where this approach has worked.	Naming and shaming is a way of free advertisement, therefore naming and shaming will work adversely.
The report itself is already naming and shaming companies.	
Using the report in such a way will provide more attention for the topic in a range of different ways.	

5. Dutch government should triple investments in scaling up nutrition

*Conclusion: the vast majority of the participants voiced support for improving investments in nutrition. In fact, many argued that current investments should be multiplied, quadrupled or more. The challenge in this regard is to make government at the very least live up to their commitments.*

Agree	Disagree
According to the report, upscaling nutrition is one of the most impactful and cost efficient investment we can make. Every dollar invested today will yield a 16 dollar return. Therefore it would be sensible to at least triple the current investments in nutrition.	It is uncertain how much is invested at this point in nutrition. By increasing the budget on nutrition we would force out other activities. If the budget remains the same, what should we drop to make room for nutrition?
Currently investments in nutrition are a relatively small part of the entire ODA budget. We should strive for a proportional distribution of funds and increase the investments in nutrition.	Tripling investments in nutrition is not enough. We should at least increase investments to five times the current level.

## Follow up

One of the areas for follow-up by the Netherlands Working Group on Nutrition with its members and partners (including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Food & Business Knowledge Platform), is to foster the further sharing of knowledge and expertise between the stakeholders of the 'Dutch diamond' (business, civil society, government and knowledge institutes). This joint analysis of and learning from what works well, is oriented towards making knowledge work for practice and policy. A further knowledge agenda on nutrition security is part of endeavors to urgently accelerate the world's progress on nutrition.

The first activities in this context are the two consecutive action-oriented discussion meetings planned in the summer and the autumn of 2015.



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