

Utilize agri-technology for zero hunger agenda: Report

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"New frontiers of the mind and technology are before us, and if they are pioneered with the same vision, boldness and drive with which the battle against food shortage was fought through the green revolution, we can achieve the goal of Zero Hunger sooner than generally considered possible," said Professor M S Swaminathan who released recommendations, included in an action agenda for nutrition security, on October 31, 2014.

The recommendations are based on a review of the current evidence and approaches to achieve nutrition security in India. A similar document entitled "Sustainable Nutrition Security in India: A Leadership Agenda for Action" was originally released by the Coalition in 2010; this document updates the evidence and calls for specific areas of action for national and state-level actors. These areas of action are urgent to enable accelerated movement in India's poor nutrition statistics.

The action agenda calls for five top areas of action. That includes the following:

Institutionalize leadership for nutrition within the prime ministerial and chief ministerial offices; Prioritize universal coverage of selected evidence-informed essential nutrition interventions, with a special focus on children under two years of age, pregnant women and adolescent girls; Finance and deliver at scale the essential nutrition interventions with active attention to equity; Ensure equitable access to food security, including dietary diversity, primary health care, safe drinking water, environmental and household sanitation and address gender issues pertaining to women's education and delaying age of conception; Position nutrition as a development indicator and establish a reliable system for periodic data-driven updates on the state of nutrition in India.

One of the important recommendations in the report suggests that a proper fusion of political will, scientific skill and people's participation can help to reduce the malnutrition problem sooner than most people feel possible.

"The Coalition has identified several urgent areas for action. They are all important, but two in particular stand out for me

positioning nutrition as a development indicator of the highest order, with frequent and regular data collection and positioning accountability for nutrition within the Prime Minister's Office. Malnutrition is too easily ignored with little accountability on commitments made--these two recommendations, if taken up, will not allow that to happen," observed Professor Lawrence Haddad.

Dr Laxmikant Palo, senior advisor - Nutrition, Save the Children, said, "In order to compliment the goals of Coalition for Food and Nutrition Security in India, the recommendations will be taken forward from this report and will be implemented at state levels by Save the Children".