



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/5-questions-usaids-richard-greene-nutrition-and-food-security>

5 Questions with USAID's Richard Greene on Nutrition and Food Security

Undernutrition affects more than 162 million children around the world who suffer from chronic deprivation manifested as **stunting**. Stunting harms a child's body and brain development and has long-term consequences for their lives as well as their countries and economies.

But we can do something about it.

Why is the U.S. Government working on global nutrition?

Evidence shows that nutrition is **one of the best ways** to achieve lasting progress in development. Children who avoid stunting in early life perform better in school, stay in school longer, and can more effectively fight off disease. Nutrition interventions are also cost effective and, when they reach young children, can yield dividends for lifetime in terms of increased productivity and earnings as an adult.

Nutrition is fundamental to achieving our development goals at the US Agency for International Development, including ending child and maternal deaths, promoting an AIDS-free generation and strengthening food security. Recognizing this, we created and launched the USAID **Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy** last year. It outlines our bold new approach for improving nutrition over the next decade.

This approach manages investments in more targeted and effective ways and links our efforts with others' to achieve impact quickly and sustainably to ensure future generations can thrive for a lifetime, even when crises strike. It includes the US Government's Feed the Future Initiative, Global Health Initiative, the USAID Office of Food for Peace development programs, resilience efforts, and other nutrition investments. Needless to say, the strategy represents an unprecedented level of investment and coordination on nutrition.

Building on that, we're also developing a government-wide coordination plan on global nutrition - which we hope to launch later this year - that will help US agencies further harmonize efforts.

Our leadership brings in other partners too. In 2010, the US Government helped launch the **1,000 Days Partnership** and **Scaling Up Nutrition Movement** to drive action and investment in nutrition, particularly for mothers and young children. These efforts have convened a host of partners from governments to businesses and civil society.

What is Feed the Future doing that is different?

Feed the Future works with countries to improve their agriculture sectors to reduce hunger and poverty as well as **undernutrition**.

For a majority of the rural inhabitants of Feed the Future focus countries, agriculture is the main livelihood and main source of income. Agriculture can improve nutrition, but without appropriate planning and linking of interventions to direct nutrition outcomes, our activities won't have a large impact on nutrition and, consequently, on good health and well-being.

So, Feed the Future integrates innovative agriculture activities along value chains to help smallholder farmers and their families boost production of nutritious foods, increase their incomes, and improve women's empowerment - all of which are pathways to improving nutrition, particularly measured by dietary diversity and reduced stunting. Farm productivity is a win-win investment because it helps both consumers and farmers.

We're creating guidance for nutrition-sensitive agriculture to ensure our programs are focusing on producing nutrient-rich crops as well as educating consumers on the importance of nutrient-rich products. We also plan, monitor and measure Feed the Future's results and impact to make our efforts as effective as possible and grow the global evidence base around what

works.

It's a big undertaking because it isn't business as usual: Feed the Future's new model of development involves working across sectors and forging new partnerships. But we're beginning to see that our work has contributed to real movement in child stunting in some historically food-insecure countries in Africa and South Asia.

Our upcoming progress report will take a more in-depth look at these trends and results in Feed the Future focus countries later this year.

How do the Feed the Future initiative, Global Health Initiative and USAID's Food for Peace program work together to improve nutrition in vulnerable areas?

Nutrition is a high-level objective for both the Global Health and Feed the Future initiatives. Together these initiatives are supporting country-owned programs to [address the root causes of undernutrition](#) and reduce it in 17 priority countries. USAID integrates nutrition programming into both initiatives.

Feed the Future and Food for Peace have been working in recent years to integrate programs as well. This started with a focus on alignment and coordination and has now moved to integrated project design in places like Bangladesh, Guatemala and Ethiopia.

As we integrate our programs, we are also measuring our collective impact. Together we've reached millions of children with nutrition interventions designed to reduce stunting.

What are some interesting breakthroughs in the area of agriculture and nutrition that are having an impact?

Many of us have heard about vitamin A-rich [orange flesh sweet potato](#), which is the best-known example of a biofortified crop. HarvestPlus and other Feed the Future partners are currently working in more than 40 countries to develop and scale other biofortified, high yielding crops, such as rice with zinc in Bangladesh and beans with iron in Rwanda.

These technologies help resolve micronutrient deficiencies or "hidden hunger," often associated with stunting, without the long-term recurring costs of fortification, supplementation and behavior change interventions. Biofortification can also be piggybacked onto other agriculture technologies, like higher yielding, drought and flood resistant crops.

We're partnering with researchers and the private sector to ensure crops like these are available and affordable for smallholder farmers to grow and families to eat.

Where does the world need to double down to really make a difference against stunting?

The United States supports a strong role for nutrition in the post-2015 development agenda being formulated this year. We believe it should include at least all six of the World Health Assembly Global Nutrition targets for stunting, wasting, women's anemia, childhood overweight, exclusive breastfeeding, and low birth weight. These targets are especially relevant to food security and nutrition goals and are likewise strong indicators for poverty, non-communicable diseases and healthy lives, as well as gender equality. International architecture like this continues to be important as we promote improved nutrition as a high-level priority.

We're also interested in addressing the double burden of nutrition: undernutrition and obesity. Our focus on preventing undernutrition in the critical 1,000 day window from pregnancy to a child's second birthday can help address these problems, but we're also exploring other ways to get involved.

[Recent evidence](#) shows us that nutrition interventions are not only cost effective, but they work – our job now is to scale them up for greater results across countries.

The global community has come a long way on nutrition. While challenges remain, the focus and commitment is there and we're seeing encouraging results from the programs we've put in place. USAID, through Feed the Future, the Global Health Initiative, Food for Peace and other nutrition efforts, is helping build the evidence base around nutrition so we can continue to scale our efforts and impact.

Ultimately, our work isn't just about alleviating poverty and hunger by investing in agriculture. It's about ensuring a healthier, more prosperous future. It starts with good nutrition.

This blog [originally appeared](#) on the Chicago Council on Global Affairs' Global Food for Thought blog.