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Establishment of Nutrition Unit
in
The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and
Natural Resources
Democratic Republic of Sudan

By:
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FAO Nutrition Consultant

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations,
Rome, June, 1979

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION	2
2.1 Population	2
2.2 Land use	2
2.3 Food Production	3
2.4 Food Availability	4
2.5 Food Consumption Survey	6
2.6 Nutritional Problems	6
2.7 Nutrition Activities	7
2.7.1. Ministry of Health	7
2.7.2. Ministry of Education	8
2.7.3. Ministry of Agriculture	8
2.7.4. University of Khartoum	9
2.8 Six Year Food Plan	9
3. THE IMPACT OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT ON DIET AND NUTRITION IN GEZIRA- A CASE STUDY	10
3.1 Introduction	10
3.2 Nature of the Project	11
3.3 Objectives of the Project	12
3.4 The relevant Nutrition problems	13
3.5 Probable Project Impact	14
3.6 Recommendations	15
4. ORGANIZATION OF THE NUTRITION UNIT	22
4.1 Location of Nutrition Unit	22
4.2 Functions of Nutrition Unit	22
4.3 Mechanism of Coordination	23
4.4 Proposed Staff for the Unit	27
4.5 Proposed Action Programmes for Nutrition Unit and other concerned Ministries	27
4.5.1. Nutrition Unit	27
4.5.2. Ministry of Health	30
4.5.3. Ministry of Education	32
4.6 International Assistance Required	34
5. NUTRITION TRAINING	35
6. SEMINAR	36
6.1 Recommendations	36
7. REFERENCES	41
APPENDIX 1- Programme of the Seminar	

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table No.</u>		<u>Page</u>
1	per Capita Food Availability and Energy and Protein Supplies, Sudan, 1975.	4
2	Mean Dietary Intake of Agricultural Labourers in Gezira	17
3	Dietary Energy and Protein Intake Recorded in Gezira	18
4	Changes in Food and Nutrients Intake in Gezira	19
5	Average Weight and Height of the children inside and outside the Gezira	20
6	Nutritional status of the children in Gezira	21

6. Seminars:

The National Seminar on Nutritional Improvement was organized by the Department of Agricultural Extension, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, under the auspices of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Sixteen participants from the Ministries of Health, Education, Agriculture, National Planning and University of Khartoum, contributed the papers in the Seminar.

The purpose of the Seminar was to stimulate the nutritionists and development specialists to discuss food and nutrition problems facing the country and their solutions in order to achieve the goals of national development through improving the nutritional and health status of the population. The papers and discussions were focused on the food and nutrition problems as they affect both individual and the nation and the most feasible means of alleviating these problems, thus recommending priority programmes for different Ministries. The need for external assistance for implementing these programmes was also discussed.

6.1 Recommendations:

The National Seminar on Nutritional Improvement, after reviewing the recommendations of the first National Food and Nutrition Seminar held in Khartoum in 1972 and those of Nutrition Education Coordination Workshop held in Medani in February 1978, and in the light of the papers submitted and the deliberations of this Seminar, it was noted that there is an increased awareness about the importance of food and nutrition and its implications on social and economic development of the country in terms of health, learning capabilities and individual economic productivity levels.

The Seminar reviewed the existing Food and Nutrition situation in Sudan and noted with concern the widespread of malnutrition among the vulnerable groups i.e. infant, young children, pregnant lactating mothers. The multisectoral factors that cause these nutrition problems are acknowledged and realising that the implementation of food and nutrition activities on a nationwide scale would require a positive commitment of various agencies concerned, the Seminar recommends:

1. Organisation:

- A high level National Food and Nutrition Council be set up at ministerial level to help in evolving a national food and nutrition policy and advise the Ministry of Planning in this respect.
- That this Council be composed of Ministers of:

National Planning	Chairman
Health	Member
Agriculture	"
Cooperation and Commerce	"
Education and Guidance	"
Industry	"
Representative of SSU	"
Sudanese Women Union	"
Relevant Experts	"
- That this Council should be supported by a full time Secretariat which will be located in the Ministry of National Planning.
- That a Technical Committee be drawn from the Head of the Nutrition Division/Units of the different Ministries and Experts in this field from Universities and relevant Institutions to advise the Council on specific technical matters pertaining to food and nutrition.
- The concerned Ministries i.e. Health , Agriculture and Education should strengthen their Nutrition Divisions/Units and two Nutrition Units be set up in:
 - i. The Ministry of Cooperation and Commerce to monitor the consumer attitudes and seasonal variation in food availability as they are responsible for food importation and pricing systems.

ii. The Ministry of National Planning to continually plan and monitor the improvement of nutritional status and act as a liaison office or secretariat for National Food and Nutrition Council and as coordinator for the different nutrition programme.

- As Sudan is embarking on a decentralization system of administration, the Planning Officer at the provincial level should act as a coordinator of the nutrition programmes assisted by a full time secretariat.

2. Policy:

That each Nutrition Unit in each of the Ministries concerned should set clear and definite objectives relevant to the role of each Ministry.

3. Health:

- Pre-requisite for implementation of any nutrition programme is the identification of the nutritional problems. The Nutrition Division of the Ministry of Health, in collaboration with other agencies, should compile the results of the past and additional surveys should be carried out to reveal food intake adequacy, nutritional deficiencies (clinical signs) and biochemical tests (sub-clinical deficiency).
- In view of the close interrelation between malnutrition and infection, the extended programme of immunization should be enhanced to reach the unprivileged rural children who are the most vulnerable groups.
- Expanding the nutrition and health education to mothers to cover all the Health Centres and should be made a major component in primary health care services at grass root level.
- In order to make the nutrition education effective, orientation training courses be organized for those workers belonging to all levels either at the peripheral level or headquarters and the staff should be well trained to use suitable audiovisual aids, including simple instruction manuals. Special emphasis should be given to the popularisation of nutritious home-made weaning foods prepared from locally available cheap ingredients.

Agriculture:

- A Nutrition Unit with the functions proposed by the FAO Consultant be set up to strengthen food and nutrition activities in the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources.



- Emphasis should be placed on the collection of more data of reliable nature regarding food crop production and consumption in the country and thereby upgrading the agricultural economics and statistics systems.
- Measures should be taken to overcome the problems related to processing, storage and marketing with special reference to local markets of the food in the Sudan.
- Improving the nutrition of the rural poor in the traditional sector by providing credit facilities for rearing small livestock, appropriate agro-based industry, food processing for income generation.
- Practical nutrition education should aim at communication of basic messages concerned with balanced diet, food production, preservation, storage, home improvement, family budgeting, farmer cooperatives, improving living conditions of the villagers by safe water supply, improving sanitation and disposal of waste.
- An in-service training course for the Extension Officers, Home Economists to cover the composition of locally available, foods, factors influencing food availability and utilisation and ways of preventing nutritional deficiencies should be organised.
- Nutrition components should be introduced in the agricultural and rural development programmes.
- There is need for national food and nutrition policy, in order to assist the economic development and improve the quality of life of the population.
- There is need to adapt a long term policy to accelerate the exploitation of the existing national fisheries resources and introduce aqua-culture in mixed farming as integral part of rural development.

Education and Guidance:

- It is recommended that the School Gardening and Nutrition Education be strengthened in view of the fact that nutrition is included in the curricula of the primary and general Secondary schools.
- It is recommended that nutrition should be incorporated in the curricula of all relevant subjects in girls and boys schools and be examinable at all levels.

- That the provincial Nutrition Centres should be strengthened by supplying with educational and audiovisual aid and training facilities.
- It is recommended that a Home-Economics Unit be established and attached to the directorate of curricula and that the revised Home-Economics syllabuses should be taught in girls'schools at all levels and be examinable subject and that suitable equipped home-economics classrooms be established in all girls' schools and teachers training institutes.
- School Gardening should be encouraged whenever feasible.
- School Feed Programme and School Gardening and Nutrition Education directorates should come under the same administration and that the School Feeding Programme should be revised to achieve the objective for which it was initiated, that is, by strengthening the administrative organization and continuous evaluation process be a part of a revised plan of Action.

Universities:

- The Universities and relevant Institute should play important role for coordinating nutrition training and research especially in the field of Medicine, Agriculture and Veterinary Science.
- The medical curriculum needs to be reviewed in the areas of content and weight of nutritional instruction in relation to total training of medical graduates.
- More time and attention should be given for training in applied nutrition and introducing elements of human nutrition in Faculties of Agriculture, Veterinary Science and Education.

3. Research:

- More attention should be given to research in the field of Avitaminosis i.e., Vitamins A, B, C, ect. and single nutrient deficiency i.e. iodine, so that fortification programmes should be planned.

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- The Nutrition Laboratories of Shambat Food Research Centre and that of the National Health Laboratory should be expanded and strengthened to be suitable for biological evaluation of the Sudanese cooked meals and for the improvement of it, instead of the chemical analysis alone carried out now.
- Research should be encouraged in the field of formulation of safe nutritions weaning foods from local cheap foods.

4. External Assistance is needed in the following fields:

- Training
- Developing weaning foods.
- Laboratory equipments.
- Improving nutrition of the rural poor.

5. Follow-up Committee:

A follow-up Committee was formed from the Ministries of Health, Education, Agriculture, National Planning and a Member from Khartoum University to meet the concerned Ministers for implementing the above recommendations.

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