



**To:** Administrator Mark Green, U.S. Agency for International Development  
**From:** Mark Keenum, BIFAD Chair and President, Mississippi State University  
**Re:** Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations from BIFAD 178th Public Meeting  
**Date:** July 29, 2019

**178<sup>th</sup> BIFAD Public Meeting: Improving Nutrition  
through Private Sector Engagement Across Food Systems**

**October 16, 2018 | Des Moines, Iowa**

BIFAD hosted a half-day public meeting on October 16, 2018, prior to the World Food Prize event in Des Moines, Iowa, to explore how private sector engagement and market system linkages across the food system can help to advance nutrition outcomes. BIFAD hosted various speakers representing U.S. universities, national government stakeholders from Africa, civil society, and the private sector to present on the topic.

*Findings:*

1. Poor diet is at the center of all malnutrition, of which different forms affect several billion people worldwide. The worst undernutrition is seen in infants under two and has lifelong consequences; overconsumption accumulates in later life and is similarly difficult to reverse.
2. The consequences of poor diet on the burden of health and disease affect not just developing countries, but also developed countries. A majority of the determinants of the global burden of disease are diet related.
3. The food system is the main shaper of diet, specifically in terms of availability, affordability, and desirability to consumers. Prices for non-staple foods (i.e., nutritious, perishable foods) are increasing rapidly and making nutritious foods inaccessible for many consumers in developing countries.
4. Although the private sector does produce highly processed foods that can lead to non-communicable diseases, businesses are also the main investors in food systems and must be part of any solution to improve diet quality.
5. For the private sector to contribute to nutrition outcomes, there must be a business case for investment.
6. Policies, food standards, and regulations can guide and incentivize the private sector to improve the availability of and access to more nutritious foods, reduce the harmfulness of foods, and serve as an important mechanism to communicate quality to consumers.

*Conclusions:*

1. Many businesses already produce foods that are part of a healthful diet, but many in developing countries need some level of technical assistance, including through financing, market analysis, product research and development, and labeling and branding. Many U.S. universities and USAID-funded activities are well positioned to provide support in these contexts.
2. To increase the availability of and accessibility to nutritious foods in developing countries, there are opportunities across the supply chain to improve technologies and infrastructure, which reduce food loss, lower food costs, and improve nutrient quality.
3. In order to increase demand by low-income consumers and ensure a willingness to pay, more-nutritious foods need to taste good, be contextually appropriate, and be aspirational (i.e., denote higher quality).

*Recommendations*

1. USAID should adopt a learning agenda to document the types of private sector engagement that effectively advance appropriate nutrition-related objectives.
2. USAID should develop a strategy for investment and engagement with the private sector to promote a safe and nutritious diet through agriculture and food systems in developing country contexts.
3. When developing activities that focus on access to financing and provision of technical assistance to help de-risk market entry for small and medium enterprises in agriculture, USAID should consider inclusion of aspects related to nutritious, safe foods, as appropriate.
4. USAID should facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogues to facilitate greater engagement by the private sector in the nutrition sector.
5. To increase consumer demand for more-nutritious and safe foods, USAID should leverage university, public and private sector expertise to develop market systems behavior change strategies based on identified behavioral and cultural determinants.