Increasing tea productivity through improved nutrition
A call to action
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Concept Brief
Millions of people are involved in the production and processing of tea, and many more rely on it indirectly for their income. The worldwide production of tea in 2011 totaled 4,299,000 tonnes, of which black tea accounts for around 75% of the global production and over 90% of the consumer markets in Europe. For some time, large plantations have dominated tea production, but especially since the mid-1990s, production by smallholder farmers has been increasing. In the main tea exporting countries, about two thirds of all tea is cultivated on relatively small farms.

Over the past decade, worldwide consumption of tea has steadily increased – 33% between 2002 and 2011. Global production has increased similarly and there are no indications that consumption growth will slow down in the coming years. To be able to satisfy growing tea demand, finding sustainable solutions that stimulate production will play a crucial role.

Many smallholder tea farmers and plantation workers’ incomes fall under the poverty line, a lot of which lack access to nutritious food. Stimulating consumption of nutritious food will not only serve their social and health interests, but it will also serve broader commercial and developmental objectives by having a positive impact on productivity. In turn, increased productivity will keep up with growing worldwide demand for tea and increase the income of smallholders and workers.

This concept brief analyzes nutritional data in five major tea producing and exporting countries, which represent 75% of all black tea exports to Europe and North America. It demonstrates the consequences of under-nutrition for the tea-producing sector. Maps initially present the dimensions of under-nutrition in tea producing areas in India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Kenya and Malawi. In sections 5 and 6, interventions for combining Good Agricultural Practices with Good Nutritional Practices are outlined. The final call for action shows the enormous potential that strengthening the link between the tea sector and improved nutrition has in positively affecting the lives of millions of people.

Under-nutrition is both a consequence and a cause of poverty. Childhood under-nutrition makes learning more difficult and ill health more likely, which hinders a child's capacity to secure a job as an adult, and the cycle of generational poverty and under-nutrition continues. UNICEF
Consequences of insufficient nutrition in value chains

It has been assumed that increased food production, reducing food prices and increasing household incomes would contribute to poverty reduction and improved nutrition. However, in 2007 the World Bank demonstrated that simply increasing agricultural production and household income does not sufficiently reduce under-nutrition. Despite estimates that under-nutrition causes losses in GDP of 2-3%, IFPRI reported that improvements to nutrition often lag behind economic development. FAO concluded in 2012 that agricultural growth will not necessarily result in better nutrition and calls for “nutrition-sensitive” agricultural growth to address under-nutrition and the related losses in GDP.

Under-nutrition is not only caused by a shortage of energy intake (quantity of the food) but also by a shortage of micronutrients (quality of the food). While too few calories (hunger) can be visible in individuals, the effects of micronutrient deficiencies (vitamins and minerals) are often hidden. Described as ‘hidden hunger’, this leads to underweight and stunted children. A larger number of people suffer from micronutrient deficiencies due to a monotonous diet, mainly in the form of staples and limited nutrient rich foods such as fruits and vegetables and animal-sourced foods.

Under-nutrition early in life has a significant effect on an individual’s future development. A lack of essential vitamins and minerals before two years of age has negative consequences for physical and mental performance later in life. These consequences are irreversible. Under-nutrition is inherited from one generation to the other: an undernourished mother has a higher chance to deliver an undernourished child, which grows into an undernourished adult.

For the tea industry in particular, under-nutrition might lead to direct losses in tea productivity from:

1. Reduced labor output and physical productivity due to illness, fatigue and other health related problems.
2. Reduced cognitive development and educational performance due to malnutrition early in life.
3. Losses in household resources from increased health care costs.

“1% Reduction in height leads to 1.4% reduction in productivity.”

“1% Reduction in iron status (anemia) leads to 1% reduction in productivity.”

“Adults that were undernourished as children have 15% less cognitive capacity.”
Mapping of under-nutrition in major tea production areas

Stunting

Children are too short for their age as result of poor diet and poor health circumstances.

A score of 25% or higher = serious level of under-nutrition that needs interventions.

Child mortality

Child mortality refers to death of infants and children under the age of five.

In 2011, the world average was 5.1%.

31 countries reported at least 10% of children under five died.

Studies of populations in tea producing areas show severe under-nutrition. The following maps illustrate the overlap of under-nutrition and tea production in India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Kenya and Malawi.15

The most frequently used indicator for measuring under-nutrition is stunting, which is a visible sign of chronic malnutrition. Stunting means that children under 5 years old are simply not growing as result of poor diet, and are therefore too short for their age. As a rule, stunting prevalence above 25% signifies severe under-nutrition problems. If under-nutrition is not addressed early, the physical and mental damage is irreversible and leads to adults with limited labor productivity. Nearly all tea producing provinces in India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Kenya and Malawi show stunting levels greater than 30%, which means there is an alarming prevalence of under-nutrition and that interventions are needed to address the problem. Stunting is particularly high in the tea growing areas in Malawi, reaching an alarming 50% (see map).

Under-nutrition causes people to be underweight, but it also affects immune and non-immune host defenses to infectious diseases making it an underlying cause of terminal infectious diseases. As much as 53% of child deaths can be attributed to being underweight making child mortality an important indicator in measuring under-nutrition. Child mortality refers to death of infants and children under the age of five. In 2011, the world average was 5.1%, but 31 countries reported at least 10% of children under five died. These rates are particularly high in Africa. Looking at Malawi as a whole, more than 12% of infants die before they reach five years of age. In tea producing provinces, the rate is even higher. The same trend is visible in Kenya. In the Asian countries included in this publication, the child mortality rate in tea producing provinces is similar to the average rate in the country.
1 India
Under-nutrition and black tea production

2 Kenya
Under-nutrition and black tea production

**Map of India and Kenya**

**India**
- **Kerala**: 21/100 Stunting, 2/100 Child mortality, 67 KT Tea production
- **Tamil Nadu**: 24/100 Stunting, 5/100 Child mortality, 191 KT Tea production
- **West Bengal**: 35/100 Stunting, 7/100 Child mortality, 230 KT Tea production
- **Assam**: 36/100 Stunting, 10/100 Child mortality, 480 KT Tea production

**Kenya**
- **Nairobi**: 34/100 Stunting, 6/100 Child mortality, 42 KT Tea production
- **Central**: 36/100 Stunting, 5/100 Child mortality, 31 KT Tea production
- **Nyanza**: 32/100 Stunting, 5/100 Child mortality, 15 KT Tea production
- **Eastern**: 34/100 Stunting, 5/100 Child mortality, 29 KT Tea production
- **Rift Valley**: 36/100 Stunting, 6/100 Child mortality, 192 KT Tea production
- **Western**: 31/100 Stunting, 12/100 Child mortality, 480 KT Tea production

**Tea Production Area**
- **Western**: 480 KT
- **Rift Valley**: 192 KT
- **Eastern**: 38 KT
- **Central**: 105 KT
- **Nyanza**: 191 KT
- **Kerala**: 230 KT
- **North Bengal, Assam**: 480 KT
- **Nairobi**: 42 KT
- **Karnataka**: 34 KT
- **Tamil Nadu**: 35 KT

**Stunting**
- Reduced height of children

**Child Mortality**
- Under the age of 5

**Tea Production**
- Amount of production in KiloTonnes
3 Sri Lanka

Under-nutrition and black tea production

4 Malawi

Under-nutrition and black tea production

Stunting
reduced height of children

Child mortality
under the age of 5

Tea production area
Amount of production in KiloTonnes
5 Indonesia

Under-nutrition and black tea production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Stunting</th>
<th>Child mortality</th>
<th>Tea production area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Java</td>
<td>34/100</td>
<td>4/100</td>
<td>Amount of production in KiloTonnes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Java</td>
<td>34/100</td>
<td>3/100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Java</td>
<td>36/100</td>
<td>4/100</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>North Sumatera</td>
<td>23/100</td>
<td>2/100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Sumatera</td>
<td>33/100</td>
<td>5/100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jambi</td>
<td>30/100</td>
<td>4/100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DI Yogyakarta</td>
<td>5/100</td>
<td>5/100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stunting: reduced height of children
Child mortality: under the age of 5
Overview

Under-nutrition and black tea production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage of world production</th>
<th>Stunting under the age of 5</th>
<th>Child mortality under the age of 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Production 2011:

- India: 988 KT
- Kenya: 378 KT
- Sri Lanka: 329 KT
- Malawi: 47 KT
- Indonesia: 120 KT

Smallholder/Estate:

- India: 27/73
- Kenya: 60/40
- Sri Lanka: 65/35
- Malawi: 7/93
- Indonesia: 29/71

Tea production Amount of production in KiloTonnes

Stunting over 25: intervention needed!
Looking at a healthy farming household one can see that overall, improved nutrition can increase productivity and reduce poverty through improved physical work capacity, cognitive development, school performance, and health.

However, families in the tea producing provinces in India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Kenya and Malawi face high undernutrition leading to poor health, reduced educational potential, and diminished immediate and future income.
How to remedy this?

Additional productivity gains might be achievable in the tea sector if it invests in interventions promoting human nutrition security through a certification incentive. The following four interrelated interventions are designed to achieve improved nutrition for smallholder farmers in the tea value chain and their households. Together they constitute a smart combination of Good Agricultural Practices and Good Nutritional Practices:

1. **Nutrition sensitive value chains for local products:**
   Building nutrition sensitive value chains beginning by first increasing local production, then preserving and marketing affordable nutrient dense foods (vegetables, fruits, animal based food products) to be sold in local markets. Sustainable improvements in the food basket can best be brought about through commercially viable value chains with push and pull factors.

2. **Increased nutritious food consumption through food diversification:**
   Promoting household food production that includes a diversified basket of nutrient rich crops such as fruits and vegetables, and animal source foods such as eggs, chicken, fish and dairy products. A comprehensive behavioural change campaign will support this intervention.

3. **Strengthening the role of women:**
   Ensuring women are empowered to make household decisions, especially to spend resources on improving nutrition for all family members at all stages of the lifecycle.

4. **Nutrition education:**
   Raising awareness about good nutrition, health and sanitation practices through education programs.

These interventions can be integrated in tea certification training programs. Organized farmer groups are the entry point for a) promoting household production of nutrient-rich crops, b) developing viable local value chains for animal-sources food products, and c) empowering women to make better nutritious choices benefitting families. In addition, tea farmer groups provide a platform for linking nutrition education to agricultural production.
As plantations supply approximately 40% of tea in the world, addressing these problems and at the same time increasing plantation workers’ productivity will have a significant impact in raising worldwide production to meet growing demand. Four interrelated interventions proposed are:

1. **Encouraging backyard farming:**
   Plantation workers may not have as much land of their own as smallholder farmers do, but they do have small plots surrounding their own houses where it is possible to grow vegetables and fruits or keep small animals. Encouraging plantation workers to produce the five most nutritious vegetables as well as raising chicken in their backyard for their own consumption can make a difference in improving diets for their households.

2. **Strengthening the link with public health services for access to micronutrient supplementation:**
   Promoting programs in which plantation workers are provided with micronutrient supplements (Vitamin A, iron, zinc and iodine) have already sparked positive results at the plantation level for both worker health and productivity. Plantation owners/management will have to cooperate with public health institutions. In some cases, like in India, programs for supplementation already exist and it is a matter of awareness and coordination of programs.

3. **Strengthening the role of women:**
   Ensuring women are empowered to make household decisions, especially to spend resources on improving nutrition for all family members at all stages of the lifecycle.

4. **Nutrition education:**
   Raising awareness about good nutrition, health and sanitation practices through education programs.

By addressing the interventions described in combination with Good Agricultural Practices, local diets will be diversified and more nutritious resulting in healthier and more productive tea farmers and plantation workers. Ultimately, the industry benefits from a more productive future generation of tea farmers and plantation workers and, consequently, a more sustainable tea value chain.
An example:

Nutrition and Food Security Component in the Lestari Sustainable Tea Program in Indonesia addressing 32,000 farmers and reaching more than 160,000 household members

Combining good tea producing practices with Good Nutritional Practices is the key to further improvement in rural communities. The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Jakarta will support this approach in financing the Food and Nutrition Component in the Lestari Sustainable Tea Program run by Business Watch Indonesia, IDH - The Sustainable Trade Initiative, Center for Development and Innovation (University Wageningen) and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN). The intervention follows four parallel tracks to achieve nutrition improvement: nutrition sensitive value chains for local availability of nutritious foods, increasing household production of nutritious foods, strengthening role of women, and nutrition education for increased consumption of nutritious foods.

The program aims to develop tools for increased availability and accessibility of nutritious foods in local markets, combined with an increased awareness of the benefits of consuming healthy meals for more than 160,000 household members.

With these 32,000 farmers already organized into farmer groups participating in local tea certification programs, this intervention is able to deliver the message of good nutritional practices to the decision makers of the households. Therefore the program is embedded into the tea farmer group training programs supported by the IDH Sustainable Trade Initiative. The program aims to increase consumption of nutritious foods for 32,000 farmers and their families; increase disposable incomes by reducing the amount of money farmers spend on food; improve the nutritional status of households; improve the local economy by selling surplus food in local markets; and strengthen the role of women who produce, process, and prepare food.

The industry will benefit from more sustainable tea value chains and more secure long-term access to quality raw materials.
VII Call to action

Michiel Leijnse, Global Brand Development Director, Unilever:

Certified, sustainable tea is here to stay!

Today the tea sector in most producing countries is confronted with diminishing yields while the worldwide demand for tea grows steadily. But under-nutrition plagues the majority of producers in the major producing countries such as Indonesia, India, Kenya, Sri Lanka and Malawi. Unremitting under-nutrition leads to a vicious cycle of under-nourished tea families over generations. As a consequence, under-nutrition contributes to continuing productivity losses in the tea sector.

Looking at trends in the tea sector, around 11% of the global tea production is currently certified. Due to the extensive commitments from major tea companies, this share is estimated to reach 20% by 2016. This is largely influenced by Unilever’s commitment, with a market share of 12%, to source all of their tea sustainably by 2020. Ideally certification standards will integrate training tools on nutrition security as a mandatory element in their curriculum in areas of high malnutrition and tea production for smallholders and plantation workers.

Addressing nutrition security can be achieved by combining Good Agricultural Practices with Good Nutritional Practices, developing nutrition sensitive value chains for local products, increasing household based production of nutritious foods, strengthening the role of women and educating people about the importance of nutrition.

Investments in better nutrition have an exceptionally high benefits to cost ratio. We encourage the tea industry to invest in nutrition sensitive tea chains in areas experiencing high rates of malnutrition to prevent future generations of undernourished tea producers and plantation workers with decreased productivity.


4 SOMO (2008), *Sustainability Issues in the Tea Sector*

5 China is the main tea producing country, but with a high domestic consumption and main export to North-America. Type of tea produced is mainly green tea. Therefore not included in our country-overview.


8 IFPRI (2011): *Global Hunger Index*

9 FAO (2012) *State of Food Insecurity in the World 2012*

10 This inter-generational cycle can be broken by good nutrition to mother and child. This window of opportunity to address under-nutrition is known as the ‘first 1000 days’, from conception until 2 years of age.


12 Behrman and Rozenzweig (2001) / Hunt (2005) The strongest and best documented productivity-nutrition relationships are those related to human capital development in early life. Height has unequivocally been shown to be related to productivity, and final height is determined in large part by nutrition from conception to age two. A 1% loss in adult height as a result of childhood stunting is associated with a 1.4 percent loss in productivity.


14 Grantham-McGregor, Fernald, and Sethurahman (1999): Malnutrition leads to indirect losses in productivity from poor cognitive development and schooling. Low birthweight may reduce a person’s IQ by 5 percentage points, stunting may reduce it by 5 to 11 points, and iodine deficiency by as much as 10 to 15 points.

15 See references


17 WHO reference median: Percentage of children stunted is the percentage of children under five years who have a height-for-age below minus two standard deviations of the National Center for Health Statistic


22 Ibid


29 Biswas, S. et al. (2005), *Nutritional Survey of Tea Workers on Closed, Re-Opened, and Open Tea Plantations of the Dooars Region, West Bengal, India.*


31 Scholz B.D. et al., *Anaemia is associated with reduced productivity of women workers even in less-physically-strenuous tasks*, *The British journal of nutrition* 1997;77:47-57.


Data are collected from the following sources:

**Malnutrition Data**

**Child Mortality**

**Stunting**

**Black Tea Production Data**


*(Disclaimer) Indonesian tea production data is based on calculations using total tea production statistics from the Ministry and applying provincial black tea production ratios from the SOMO report. Therefore this data should be considered estimation rather than fact.


**Colophon**

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Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)
Centre for Development Innovation-Wageningen University and Research Centre,

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**Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition**  
**GAIN**

Driven by a vision of a world without malnutrition, GAIN was created in 2002 at a Special Session of the U.N. General Assembly on Children. GAIN supports public-private partnerships to increase access to the missing nutrients in diets necessary for people, communities and economies to be stronger and healthier. With a current daily reach of over 667 million people in more than 30 countries, GAIN’s goal is to improve the lives of one billion people by 2015 within the most vulnerable populations around the world through access to sustainable nutrition solutions.

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