

Relations between poor health and food insecurity in developing countries:

Agricultural perspective: How do human diseases affect food security?

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Abstract

The presentation discusses the interactions between health, agriculture and food security. It looks at the different dimensions of food security (availability, access and stability) and analyses the impact of poor health on these. In particular, it identifies key variables through which poor health affects food security: low labour availability and quality; loss of knowledge and skills; weakened nutrition; impoverishment at the household and national levels. It also identifies long term impacts on agricultural productivity and sustainability. The presentation draws on the example of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa and looks into possible similarities with other diseases that arise from the interactions between agriculture and the environment such as malaria and avian flu. The presentation argues that diseases such as HIV/AIDS cannot be addressed through the health sector alone and, more specifically, cannot be addressed without the participation of the agricultural sector. It suggests clear lines of action for the agriculture sector to contribute efficiently to the mitigation of the consequences as well as to the prevention of the further transmission of human diseases related to rural poverty.