

Integrating Gender and Nutrition within Agricultural Extension Services

Info Sheet
June 2016

Basics of Nutrition

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Eat a variety of foods for Protection, Energy and Body Building to be healthy and well. (Zimbabwe, FAO 2015)

The body needs MACRO and MICRO nutrients

MACRO nutrients are carbohydrates, proteins, and fats

MICRO nutrients are vitamins and minerals

A diverse diet should provide plenty of MACRO and MICRO nutrients.

References:

¹ World Health Organization. *Nutrition*, 2016. Accessed 6/16/2016 www.who.int/topics/nutrition/en/

² Smolin L, Grosvenor M. *Nutrition Science and Applications*, 4th ed. John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2016.

Introduction

Food provides essential nutrients to help one perform daily activities, to support growth, to maintain energy, and to keep one healthy. The purpose of the “Basics of Nutrition” fact sheet is to provide an overview of the nutrients that people need to consume on a daily basis.

Basics of Nutrition

Nutrition: Intake of food in relation to the body's need¹

Macronutrients²:

Carbohydrates provide energy for the body to move, breathe, and perform daily activities (fetch water, cook, work in the field, attend animals).

Examples of food: Rice, Porridge, Cassava, Sweet potatoes

Proteins help strengthen the muscles and repairs wounds.

Examples of food: Beef, Fish, Cowpeas, Lentils

Fats and oils provide the body with energy, support brain function and protect organs (heart, liver, skin). But, these need to be consumed in small amounts throughout the day.

Examples of food: Butter, Oil, Nuts, Seeds

Micronutrients²:

Vitamins support the immune system, help the body grow, and break down food into energy. Vitamins can be divided in fat soluble vitamins including vitamins A, D, E, and K; and water soluble vitamins including B vitamins (e.g. niacin, riboflavin, folate), and vitamin C. Some vitamins that many people do not consume enough include vitamins A and C:

Vitamin A - Helps with eye sight and reduces illness

Examples of food: Carrots, Squash, Dark leafy greens, Liver

Vitamin C - Helps wound healing, repairs and maintains bones and teeth

Example of food: Bell peppers, Dark leafy greens, Papaya, Tomatoes

Minerals support bone growth, regulate heartbeat, and proper nerve function. Minerals that people do not consume enough include iron and zinc:

Iron – Helps provide oxygen to cells and reduces illness

Examples of food: Fortified cereal, Chickpeas, Lentils, Liver

Zinc – Helps with growth, brain development and reduces illness

Examples of food: Beef, Lentils, Shrimp, Seeds