

Integrating Gender and Nutrition within Agricultural Extension Services

Tip Sheet
May 2017

Example of Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture Messages

These messages were originally developed by the Food and Nutrition Section of the Ministry of Agriculture in Zambia for inclusion in the Planning and Resource Guide for Agricultural Extension Officers (2017). They are intended to help extension officers support farm households to improve nutrition and health.

Organizations wishing to use these messages are advised to review them through a stakeholder review panel, adapt them to local context and needs, and test their usefulness before widespread dissemination..



Wash your hands to prevent the spread of diseases or contamination of food!

Always wash your hands

- before preparing food
- after using the latrine
- after changing nappies;
- after handling animals; and
- after using agro-chemicals

Recognize and support the different needs and interests of women and men in agriculture.

Why: Women play a big role in agriculture. Attention to the different needs of men and women in agriculture can support women's empowerment – not only for improving household productivity and income, but also for better family nutrition.

How: Extension officers can take small steps to support the needs of men and women in farm households:

- Help men and women join savings groups to access savings and loans for inputs and other productive activities, like vegetable growing.
- Introduce women to value chains that allow them to balance roles between farm, field and homestead.
- Promote use of labor-saving technologies to help women reduce agricultural labor and focus on childcare.
- Encourage men to share responsibility for childcare and other household chores to support women's participation in agriculture and her care while pregnant and breastfeeding. *Provide a time to rest for pregnant mothers.*

Increase production of more diverse and nutritious foods, including small livestock, for home consumption.

Why: Families need diverse foods of the right quantity and quality to meet their food and income needs throughout the year.

How: These are *some* examples of actions farm households can take to grow more diverse and more nutritious foods:

- Grow legumes, such as groundnuts, soya beans, cowpeas, and beans. Beans can provide up to three harvests per year and offer food at all stages of their growth – leaves, pods, fresh seed and pulses.
- Grow vegetable gardens to increase household access to nutrient-rich foods.
- Raise chickens for eggs or meat. Small livestock is a good source of animal proteins and income.
- Irrigate fields and gardens, if possible, to produce food throughout the year.
- Control stagnant water to reduce risk of water-borne diseases.

Increase household nutrition through on-farm processing, preservation and storage practices

Why: Good post-harvest practices minimize crop losses, improve food safety and maintain nutrients in food so that more and better food is available for consumption throughout the year.



Pregnant and lactating women need

additional meals of diverse, nutrient-dense foods every day to help baby grow strong.

Children 0-6 months should receive breastmilk *only*. No water or porridge!

Children 6-8 months eat 2-3 meals and 1-2 small snacks per day.

Children 9-11 months eat 3-4 meals and 1-2 snacks.

Slowly introduce **children aged 12-24 months** to the family diet, continuing to feed them 3-4 meals and 1-2 snacks per day.

When working in fields, bring a small snack for young children above 6 months.



This is just one example of a food pyramid. Use a food pyramid, plate, or similar that depicts the dietary recommendations for your country or region.

How: These are some ways to maintain food nutrients, extend the shelf-life of food and reduce food loss:

Fruits and vegetables:

- Only preserve fresh – never rotten – fruits and vegetables.
- Dry fruits and vegetables with a solar dryer or on a clean mat in the shade, away from animals.
- Use clean and dry packages for storage.

Staples and legumes:

- Dry cereals and legumes in the shade on clean mats, away from animals.
- Proper processing and drying of cassava is required to reduce risk of cyanide poisoning.
- Remove stones, husks, pods and broken grain before storing maize and legumes. *Never store grain with signs of mold or other damage.*

Grow, buy and EAT more diverse & nutritious foods following the “Recommended Daily Food Pyramid”

Why: The foods families choose to grow, buy and eat have a big impact on family health, environment and resources. All people, especially pregnant and lactating women and children under two, require a diverse diet with balanced foods to be strong, healthy and productive.

How: These are small steps to begin to eat a more diverse and balanced diet:

- Eat a staple food, like maize, potatoes, cassava or rice, at every meal with beans or fish, vegetables and fruit in season. Try to eat different foods from each food group at every meal. A combination of foods from the different food groups in the food pyramid is the best.
- Add high-nutrient foods, like soya or groundnut flour, to green vegetables and other foods to improve taste and nutritional value.
- Add soft foods, like mashed banana, avocado, groundnut paste or pounded fish or meat, to porridge, especially for young children.
- Eat animal-source foods, like meat, poultry, eggs and fish, regularly.
- Eat local foods, like caterpillars, termites, mice and grasshoppers.
- Eat nutritious snacks between meals, like an egg, milk, edible seeds, roasted cassava, roasted maize or fruits.

Protect natural resources through good agricultural practices.

Why: Healthy natural resources, including soil and water, are necessary to sustain and increase production of diverse foods.

How: These are some examples of good agricultural practices that protect natural resources required to grow diverse, nutritious foods.

- Prepare fields early and plant on time to achieve strong yields and protect crop quality.
- Intercrop maize with legumes, like groundnuts, cowpeas or pigeon peas, and rotate crops every season.
- Leave crop residue on the field to protect against soil erosion.
- Practice safe storage and use of agro-chemicals. Store them away from children and food and *always* follow instructions on the package.

