

Aging Global Population

Addressing society's most complex issues requires a systems-based approach that maximizes partnerships and innovation. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer a framework for tackling these challenges by fostering cross-sector collaboration and guiding policy decisions. The dairy sector is helping catalyze progress towards achieving the SDGs, improving quality of life, reducing global disparities, and ensuring a sustainable future for all.

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



The Situation

- People worldwide are living longer. The World Health Organization estimates by 2050, the world's population of people aged 65 years and older is projected to more than double, far outpacing population growth under 65 years.¹ This global demographic transition has implications for nearly all sectors of society, including labor and financial markets, demand for goods and services, as well as family structures and intergenerational ties.
- While the human lifespan has increased, health spans (i.e., the years lived in good health) still lag behind. Although we live longer, we are not necessarily living healthier for longer.
- The lifespan-health span gap has led to escalating rates of noncommunicable disease (NCD) and age-related conditions – such as type 2 diabetes, dementia, sarcopenia, osteoporosis, and cardiovascular disease – placing strains on healthcare systems, labor and resourcing, and public health expenditures.² With fewer people to care for older persons, it is important to take steps to help them live more years vibrantly and independently.

The Path Forward

Older persons – and all persons – should enjoy quality of life and live in good health throughout the lifespan. Promoting functional independence and reducing strain on healthcare resources will be critical to supporting healthy aging, particularly in developed economies. Nutritious diets which emphasize accessible high-quality protein and essential vitamins and minerals can help improve health span and enhance overall wellbeing.



How Dairy Can Help

- **Provides high-quality protein:** Studies show dairy is a highly digestible, high-quality protein source, providing essential amino acids people need. Older adults who do not consume enough high-quality protein are vulnerable to a damaging cycle of health events.^{3,4}
- **Improves bone density and lean muscle mass:** Age-related loss of muscle mass and function often leads to increased risk of falls and fractures, and a loss of mobility. Nutrition-based approaches to fracture prevention are cost effective. A large clinical trial in Australia demonstrated that consuming recommended amounts of dairy closed critical gaps in calcium and high-quality protein, and resulted in reduced falls and fractures among elderly persons and created healthcare savings.^{5,6}
- **Closes nutrient gaps:** Dairy foods are nutrient-dense, providing many critical nutrients to healthy aging, such as calcium, vitamins (including B2 and B12), and high-quality protein.⁷ Because older adults can have limited appetites and incomes, choosing nutrient rich options such as milk, cheese, and yogurt are key to being well nourished by making every bite count.



Partnering with Dairy

- **Promote cooperative efforts to support inclusion of nutrient-rich dairy in food-based dietary guidance:** Animal sourced foods, such as dairy, are vital for supporting health span by providing affordable and accessible essential nutrients to vulnerable populations, like older persons. Because of its unique nutrient package and high-quality protein, dairy should be maintained as its own food group in dietary guidelines at 2-3 servings to satisfy global calcium and other shortfall nutrient needs.
- **Encourage nutrient-rich foods in elder care foodservice operations and community-based nutrition programs:** Nutrient dense foods with calcium and high-quality protein can support functional independence and reduce fall and fracture risk among elderly adults. Serving these foods in elder care foodservice operations and community-based programs for older persons can help support health span while also reducing associated costs.^{5,6}



Scan for references
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Impact Story

Supporting Functional Independence and Health Span in Older Adults

OVERVIEW

A series of peer-reviewed papers investigated the effect of closing nutrient gaps in calcium and protein among >1,000 older persons living in more than 60 residential care facilities.

AUTHORS

University of Melbourne, Wageningen University, USDA-ARS, Garvan Institute of Medical Research, University of Technology Sydney, Monash University, University of Manchester, Australian Institute of Musculoskeletal Science

KEY FINDINGS^{5,6,8}

- By providing critical nutrition elderly adults need, dairy foods helped significantly reduce risk of falls and fractures, resulting in better quality of life.
- Consumption of full-fat dairy foods, including milk, cheese, and yogurt (3.5 servings daily) helped maintain muscle mass and had no effect on weight gain nor increased risk of cardiovascular disease.
- For a cost of roughly \$0.50 USD per day, the researchers estimated a healthcare cost savings of over \$5,000 USD per fracture averted.