

Childhood Malnutrition

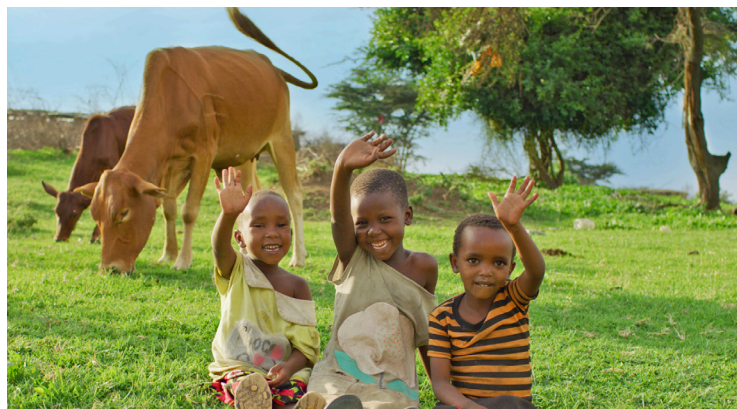
Addressing society's most complex issues requires a systems-based approach that maximizes partnerships and innovation. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer a framework for tackling these challenges by fostering cross-sector collaboration and guiding policy decisions. The dairy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

2 ZERO HUNGER



The Situation

- Malnutrition in all its forms is a critical global health challenge. A nutritious diet is essential for human development, economic prosperity, and long-term sustainability.
- According to UNICEF, over 400 million children lack essential nutrients with nearly 150 million suffering from stunting and 45 million from wasting – the most severe forms of chronic and acute malnutrition most prevalent in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia.¹ Still more face hidden hunger, with irreversible lifetime effects on personal growth and development that perpetuate poverty and cost the global economy \$3 trillion annually in lost productivity.^{2,3,4}
- Climate change is making global child malnutrition harder to solve. The Gates Foundation projects between 2024 and 2050, climate change will cause 40 million additional children to be stunted and 28 million additional children to suffer from wasting.⁴



How Dairy Can Help

- **Reduces risk of stunting:** According to projections by the International Food Policy Research Institute, improving dairy productivity and consumption in just five countries - Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Nigeria and Tanzania - could prevent up to 109 million cases of childhood stunting by 2050.⁵
- **Improves food security:** The dairy sector enhances food security by ensuring sustained access to nutritious foods, provides a regular source of income and employment for farmers, contributes to a biocircular economy and agricultural value through the use of cow manure as natural fertilizer, and improves the affordability of high-quality dairy products, thereby supporting economic growth and making nutritious food more accessible.^{5,6,7}
- **Provides high-quality protein:** Dairy is considered a superior protein source in quality and digestibility compared to plant-based foods, based on its amino acid composition and bioavailability. Access to higher-quality and more digestible protein sources maximizes nutrition in every bite, which is critical for food insecure populations.^{8,9}
- **Closes nutrient gaps:** Dairy foods are nutrient-dense, providing many of the nutrients children lack, including calcium, iodine, vitamins (including B2 and B12), protein, and healthy fats.⁴ These nutrients are crucial for immunity, cognitive function, health and well-being, especially in vulnerable groups such as children and pregnant and lactating mothers.

The Path Forward

While no single solution can eliminate childhood malnutrition and its devastating effects, targeted interventions that consider nutrient quality and address the climate crisis can drive significant progress and improve resiliency across the food system. Ensuring the availability of culturally appropriate, nutrient-dense foods is essential for nourishment from pregnancy through birth, and as children grow, to bridge critical nutrient gaps during the pivotal and vulnerable window of cognitive development and growth.



Partnering with Dairy

- **Promote cooperative efforts to support inclusion of nutrient-rich dairy in healthy, sustainable diets:** Animal sourced foods, such as dairy, are vital for combatting childhood malnutrition by providing essential nutrients, especially to vulnerable, undernourished populations. Consumption should be considered within the nutrition needs locally, while facilitating practices that mitigate environmental impacts to ensure sustainable production.¹⁰
- **Scale up finance, technology and capacity building to enhance agriculture and food security:** Initiatives such as the Dairy Nourishes Africa Initiative show that investments in the dairy value chain, from farmer education to technology and capacity building, improves nutrition status, economic growth, and poverty reduction.²⁴ Examples include training in safe milk storage, carefully targeted financial assistance for small-scale farmers, and using genetic selection for more productive cows. Dairy also plays a vital role in the success of school meal programs across the world.



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Impact Story

The Race to Nourish a Warming World: 2024 Goalkeepers

OVERVIEW

Each year, Goalkeepers shares the latest estimates on 18 indicators, ranging from poverty to education. These indicators help organizers understand the progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals—where innovation and investment are creating bright spots, and where we're collectively falling short.

RESEARCH PARTNERS

Gates Foundation

KEY OUTCOMES

The world's worst child health crisis is malnutrition.

- More than 400 million children aren't getting the nutrients they need to grow and thrive
- Climate change is making it even harder to solve

New tools and promising research in the dairy sector are helping kids get healthier even as the world gets hotter, with results such as:

- **6x more milk produced by cows:** New agricultural technologies are increasing the amount of milk that cows produce in Kenya
- **109 million stunting cases prevented:** Improving dairy productivity in the supply chain in just 5 countries – Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania – could prevent millions of cases of childhood stunting by 2050