

School Nutrition Programmes in the Sustainable Food Systems Value Chain



Prof. Annelie Gresse

School nutrition programmes are part of the sustainable food value chain. However, as it is seen as a matter for education, these programmes are not always part of the coordinated production and value-adding activities of the chain. Although these programmes have been highlighted as an important intervention to support childhood nutrition, the implementation and maintenance of the programmes are complex and costly. It should therefore be managed well to contribute to the sustainable food value chain.

The purpose of this address is to identify what is known about the influence of various system factors on the implementation of school nutrition programmes internationally, but specifically in Kenya and South Africa and discuss possible solutions.

The World Health Organization found that food value chain challenges in school meal programmes worldwide, but especially in developing countries, not only include financial constraints, but also poor infrastructure, poor control and monitoring of programmes, poor sanitation and lack of capacity and resources of small-scale farmers to ensure steady provision of food for the programmes. In Kenya, six key areas of concern for school meals provision were identified, including some that are directly link to the food value chain, namely lack of

financial sources for school meals, poor governance and management structures, poor support for food procurers and smallholder farmers to provide suitable and diverse production for school meals, poor infrastructure and environmental safety problems in schools. Similar challenges were found in South Africa, with late payment of food-suppliers and inadequate training of food-handlers that affect the quality and quantity of the meals, as important contributors.

Widespread hunger and malnutrition amongst children can have a lasting effect on their wellbeing and economic contribution to the country. While school nutrition programmes can help to support childhood nutrition, strategies to include these programmes as part of a sustainable, value adding link in the food value chain, should not be left to education only, but should be addressed from all sectors in the food value chain to overcome persistent challenges.

PROFILE

Annelie Gresse was born on 5 December 1959 in Namibia and matriculated in 1977 in Stellenbosch, South Africa, after which she obtained a BSc Home Economics (Ed) degree, Cum Laude and a BSc Hons Home Economics as the University of Stellenbosch in 1982. She obtained a MSc Home Economics at the University of the Free State in 1988 and a DSc (Dietetics) at North-West University in 1991. Her research area was the glycaemic index and type 2 Diabetes Mellitus. She passed the examination of the Professional Board for Dietetics for registration as dietitian with the SAMDC (now HPCSA) during 1988. In addition, she has done numerous short courses. She started her career at the University of the Free State in 1982 - 1985 as lecturer in the Department of Home Economics. After two years a Senior Nutritionist in the National Department of Health, she joined the Technikon Northern Transvaal, worked for four years and MEDUNSA and then the Technikon Northern Gauteng, with an additional part-time appointment at North-West University. From 1999 she was a consultant for a restaurant group, after which she started a hotel school for Stenden University (The Netherlands) in South Africa in 2001. She then assisted with the development of a hotel school in Stellenbosch from 2008 and since 2012 she is the Head of Department of the Department of Human Nutrition and Dietetics at Nelson Mandela University, Port Elizabeth, South Africa. She is a member of various professional associations, member on the Dietetics and Nutrition Board of the Health Profession Council of South Africa and an honorary member of the Kenya Nutrition and Dietetics Institute in Nairobi. She is also a member of the curriculum development group for Dietetics and Nutrition of the Council for Higher Education. Since 1985 she was involved in more than 40 major research projects and published 17 articles in accredited journals and many more manuals, conference abstract and articles in non-accredited journals and presented at 67 conference or workshops.