



PRESS RELEASE

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Policymakers to Meet in Kigali on Getting Nutritious Foods to People

Washington D.C., March 27, 2014. On March 31, more than 275 high-level stakeholders from government, business and civil society will converge in Kigali, Rwanda, for a three-day consultation on ‘Getting Nutritious Foods to People.’

Nearly one in three people globally suffers from a lack of essential vitamins and minerals such as vitamin A, zinc and iron in the diet. This condition – known as hidden hunger – increases the risk of stunting, anemia, blindness, infectious diseases, and even death. Women and children are especially vulnerable.

HarvestPlus, a global program to improve nutrition and public health, has worked with partners to develop new varieties of nutritious food crops that provide more vitamin A, zinc, or iron. These crops – already being grown by more than a million farmers – have been conventionally bred. They include cassava, maize and orange sweet potato for vitamin A; beans and pearl millet for iron; and rice and wheat for zinc.

Studies have shown that these new varieties do provide nutritional benefits to consumers. “We’re just beginning to scratch the surface...we want to increase access to these nutritious crops as quickly as possible. Now is the time to bring partners together to figure out how we do this together,” says Howarth Bouis, the Director of HarvestPlus.

The conference is being hosted by the Government of Rwanda. More than 500,000 Rwandan farmers have already planted new varieties of beans that are rich in iron. These new iron beans also yield many more tons per hectare than the local varieties, and the surplus can be shared or sold.

Keynote speakers include M.S. Swaminathan, the renowned father of India’s Green Revolution; Chris Elias, President of the Global Development Program at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; and, Akinwumi Adesina, Nigeria’s Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development and Forbes Africa Person of the Year 2013. Adesina serves on the Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition, a newly formed expert group that advises on nutrition-enhancing agricultural and food policies and investments. The panel will convene a special session to explore how biofortification could help decision makers in developing nutrition-sensitive agriculture and food policies.

“The evidence is promising, and we now need to explore the potential for biofortification to enhance agriculture and food policies for nutrition,” says Jeff Waage, Technical Advisor to the Global Panel and Director of the London International Development Centre.

The invitation-only consultation will be livestreamed and moderated by Jeff Koinange, an award-winning Kenyan journalist and past Chief Anchor for Africa for Arise Television and CNN Senior Africa Correspondent.

For more information, please visit the [conference website](#). Learn more about [HarvestPlus](#). Learn more about the [Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition](#).

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