

THE ROLE OF AGRICULTURE IN THE FACE OF FOOD TRENDS AND THE IMPACT ON NUTRITION AND HEALTH

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When considering food consumption as one of the primary endpoints of agricultural production, then nutritional and health effects related to that consumption become of paramount importance. Food consumption globally takes place against a background of complex Standards that have been developed both internationally and nationally.

The Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) of the World Trade Organization references in particular the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) as a “relevant international organization” for food standards. The parent bodies of the CAC are the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). Two of the Committees of the CAC which work closely together in the development of Standards and Guidelines are the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL) and the Codex Committee on Nutrition and Foods for Special Dietary Uses (CCNFSDU)

The introduction of the agricultural technology of biofortification entails breeding specific traits into a plant, either through conventional breeding or by genetic modification using the techniques of modern biotechnology. The plant then produces and contains essential micronutrients that can be utilized by the human body. The use of biofortification has been demonstrated to have a positive nutritional effect on human health. This is particularly the case in developing countries where diets may be nutrient poor. The CCFL has developed Guidelines on Nutrition Labelling and Guidelines on Nutrition and Health Claims which have proven to be useful to Member Governments in the development of National Legislation. Consideration of biofortification standards may be an issue that is introduced to the CAC. Countries should be considering appropriate policy development in this area.