



# Fertilizing crops to address malnutrition

By [The International Fertilizer Industry Association \(IFA\)](#) July 07, 2013 | 2:35 pm EDT

 COMMENTS



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At the recent G8 landmark “Hunger Summit” world leaders recognized the key role nutrition plays in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and pledged \$4 billion to end malnutrition, targeting in particular stunting as it affects 165 million children in developing countries. One of the five goals of the [Zero Hunger Challenge](#) is also the eradication of stunting. In addition, the growing concerns about macro and micro nutrient deficiencies in food have been addressed by the updated [Lancet report](#) on maternal and child nutrition, published at the beginning of June. It highlights the imperative need for better nutrient data at national level in order to devise a global approach targeting hidden hunger hotspots. IFA applauds this focus on malnutrition, considering that traditionally, food security concerns have been exclusively focused on availability of food. IFA also advocates for an emphasis on eradicating hunger and malnutrition in the new [post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals](#).

Whereas the contribution of fertilizers to increased yields has long been acknowledged, they can also play an important role in addressing malnutrition. IFA and its partners the International Plant Nutrition Institute (IPNI) and the International Zinc Association (IZA) have just released three new [infographics](#), which illustrate the role of macro and micronutrient fertilization in combatting malnutrition. These graphics constitute a visual vehicle for the scientific research findings published in the [Fertilizing Crops to Improve Human Health: A Scientific Review](#) jointly edited by IFA and IPNI in late 2012.

“Malnutrition affects 2 billion people worldwide and accounts for 60 percent of deaths of children under the age of 5. It is caused by the inadequate nutrient component of foods”, stated Terry L. Roberts, president of IPNI. Recognizing this important public health issue, IFA members and partners are working to share more widely the solution that agronomic biofortification offers to deliver the nutrients needed by soils, crops, animals and people.

“Micronutrient fertilization is a simple, affordable and sustainable solution to contribute to eradicating deficiencies globally, in particular in the case of zinc, selenium and iodine”, explained Charlotte Hebebrand, director general of IFA. Partnerships already exist in many countries but the scale of the work needs further dissemination of these important findings provided in IFA-IPNI’s scientific review. The infographics aim at alerting policymakers of this important existing solution and encouraging further partnerships between Ministries, research organizations and fertilizer companies, as is already happening in Brazil, China and India. “We have the science it is now time to put it into practice and save the lives of children worldwide, like we did it in Turkey”, declared Esin Mete, president of IFA and CEO of Toros Agri in Turkey.

The infographics clearly highlight the significant improvements that can be made to crop productivity, livestock health and people's nutrition by simply adding micronutrients to regular fertilizer products. For most micronutrients, if the soils are deficient, the same deficiency is found in the crops, the animals and the people. One of the infographics describes some key examples of successful strategies implemented in Europe, Asia and Oceania. In Finland, for example, the government implemented the addition of selenium to fertilizers in order to help tackle heart disease. Turkey, on the other hand, has been adding zinc, resulting in increased wheat, potato and fruit yields. "Zinc is the most common micronutrient deficiency, which reduces crop production and nutritional quality potential even when macro nutrient needs are met," declared Andrew Green, director of the Zinc Nutrient Initiative.