Nurturing Development with Animal-Source Foods

THE ISSUE
Stunting, a measure of chronic malnutrition, is associated with reduced survival rate, cognitive and motor development, economic productivity, and higher adult poverty. Globally, nearly 1 in 4 children under 5 is stunted. Of the 7 billion people in the world, 2 billion suffer from micronutrient malnutrition.

Stunted mothers are more likely to have stunted children.

Factors contributing to improving nutrition globally:

- Education (1/3)
- Water (1/3)
- Food (1/3)

There is clear evidence of the benefits of animal-source food (ASF; milk, meat, eggs) consumption, especially among children and pregnant and lactating women.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ASF
In a study of meat or milk supplementation in Kenyan children’s diets...

- Test scores increased
- Vitamin B12
- Physical activity
- Arm muscle mass
- Leadership
- Playful activities

More than plant foods, animal-source foods have micronutrients (e.g., vitamins A, B12) critical for growth, neurological function, and immunity.

In a study in Ecuador, eating one egg/day at 6 months of age for a period of 6 months reduced stunting by 46%.

THE WAY FORWARD
Future research and development efforts should focus on improving human health and nutrition of the vulnerable through animal-source foods.

RESEARCH
- Evaluate the influence of maternal ASF nutrition interventions on the mother, infant, and childhood nutrition status
- Increase the evidence base of the role ASF plays in cognitive and psychomotor development
- Increase collaboration among livestock, nutrition, and health communities to improve (or to facilitate) pathways to improved nutrition through ASF

DEVELOPMENT
- Continue to increase implementation of nutrition-sensitive approaches in agricultural development projects
- Increase the availability of ASF through technology development and extension
- Implement innovative behavior change strategies to increase ASF consumption at the household level

Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Livestock Systems
Based on the 2017 Global Nutrition Symposium presentations, available at www.livestocklab.ifas.ufl.edu