



Report on the 4th Congress Hidden Hunger

Background

The 4th Congress Hidden Hunger: **“Hidden hunger and the transformation of food systems: How to combat the double burden of malnutrition?”** was held from February 27 to March 1, 2019, in Stuttgart, Germany. The global meeting of members belonging to the scientific community, representatives from politics, government and the media as well as members of civil society organizations, advocacy groups and private and public sector bodies was organized by the University of Hohenheim together with the Society of Nutrition and Food Science (SNFS). It was chaired by Hans K. Biesalski, Former Head of the Institute of Biological Chemistry and Nutrition and Former Director of the Food Security Center (FSC) at the University of Hohenheim as well as Regina Birner, Chair of Social and Institutional Change in Agricultural Development of the Institute of Agricultural Sciences in the Tropics at the University of Hohenheim.

The 4th Congress Hidden Hunger was a continuation of the successful, international event series “Congress Hidden Hunger” which started in 2013. At the 1st Congress Hidden Hunger with the title “From assessment to solutions”, the causes and consequences of hidden hunger as well as possible solutions were discussed. The 2nd Congress Hidden Hunger on the topic “Hidden hunger, childhood development and long-term prospects for society and economy” which was hosted in 2015 addressed the specific problem of hidden hunger during pregnancy and the first years of life. Associated, serious consequences for child development and the increased risk for maternal mortality were also discussed. The considerable and continuous feedback to the first two congresses convinced the organizers to host the 3rd Congress Hidden Hunger on the topic “Post-2015 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals: Where are we now? Strategies to improve nutrition quality and combat hidden hunger” in 2017. The “Congress Hidden Hunger” provides an ideal platform for global interactions and network activities, as well as a forum to young scientists and members of small organizations. A characteristic feature of the “Congress Hidden Hunger” is represented by its associated congress-owned scholarship program that consists of grants of external donors given to young scientists and members of mainly small organizations from developing countries to travel to Germany and participate in the congress. Scholarship applicants must have the aim of supplementing the congress with an oral or a poster presentation of their ideas and projects related to the fight against world famine and hidden hunger in the context of the respective focused topic.

At the 4th Congress Hidden Hunger in March 2019, the topic of hidden hunger with reference to the worldwide problem of overweight as well as the global nutritional situation was discussed from the perspectives of governmental and non-governmental organizations, politicians, economists, nutritionists and agricultural scientists. Various disciplines from high- and low-income countries were brought together to focus on the links and gaps between science and reality in all parts of the world. Amongst others, successfully established projects and initiatives - such as the special initiative “One World – No Hunger” of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) - played a major role. The organizers were once again grateful for the participation of numerous international speakers who helped unveil the problem of hidden hunger and bring it on a visible stage. Improving visibility and raising further awareness are tools to promote the achievement of the common goal of ending worldwide hunger and hidden hunger.



Sponsors

Thanks to the generous financial support of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Federal Office for Agriculture and Food (BLE) at the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) and the Ministry for Rural Affairs and Consumer Protection of Baden-Württemberg (MLR), it was possible to organize a congress with speakers from all over the world and different expertise related to the topic of nutrition transformation and the double burden of malnutrition. The organization of the congress was also secured thanks to generous donations from further organizations and institutions: Sabri Ülker Food Research Foundation, Stiftung Entwicklungszusammenarbeit Baden-Württemberg (SEZ), Sight and Life Foundation, World Food Programme. Thanks to financial means, scholarships were made possible by the following organizations and companies: Certmedica International GmbH, Foundation fiat panis, Deutsche Welthungerhilfe e.V. All sponsors should be thanked again at this point.

Exhibitions

The scientific program of the congress consisting of (political) speeches, oral presentations and (panel) discussions was complemented by a poster exhibition of 30 scientific posters from all over the world. Furthermore, it was enriched by four exhibition stands representing the following organizations and institutions: Bioanalyt GmbH, German Federal Office for Agriculture and Food (BLE), Stiftung Entwicklungszusammenarbeit Baden-Württemberg (SEZ) together with the Food Security Center (FSC) of the University of Hohenheim, Society of Nutrition and Food Science (SNFS). Information material as well as advice and finally the possibility for communication and knowledge transfer were offered by those exhibitors.

Co-organizers of parallel sessions

The 4th Congress Hidden Hunger offered some organizations and institutions the opportunity to present themselves with a parallel session and to make a significant contribution. Parallel sessions were organized by the following organizations and institutions: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Gesellschaft für angewandte Vitaminforschung e.V. (GVF), Hohenheim Research Center for Global Food Security and Ecosystems (GFE), Ministry of Rural Affairs and Consumer Protection of Baden-Württemberg (MLR) together with the University of Burundi and the Food Security Center (University of Hohenheim) as well as the University of Applied Forest Sciences Rottenburg, Sabri Ülker Food Research Foundation, Sight and Life Foundation. All co-organizers should be thanked again at this point for their contribution and the additions to the congress theme.

Specials and highlights

Two specials were part of the scientific program. In a press conference, some experts spoke to the press representatives and answered their questions. The press conference was moderated by Florian Klebs, Head of the Press Office of the University of Hohenheim. The podium consisted of: Hanns-Christoph Eiden (President, Federal Office for Agriculture and Food (BLE), Germany), Jørgen Dejgaard Jensen (Professor of economics, University of Copenhagen, Denmark), Stefan Schmitz (Deputy Director-General and Commissioner for the “One World – No Hunger” Initiative, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)), Matin Qaim (Professor of International Food Economics and Rural Development,



University of Göttingen, Germany) as well as the congress chairs Regina Birner and Hans K. Biesalski.

On the last congress day, the Society of Nutrition and Food Science (SNFS) awarded the three best poster presentations with a prize of 200 EUR each. All three posters received the same price, as opposed to prior announcements, as they were considered equivalent. As part of the program, the prizes were awarded to the following posters and their presenters:

(1) T. Randrianajaina¹, J. Rambeloson Zo^{1,2}, M. Rakotondravelo¹, J. Rambeloson³, E. Rambelontsalama, M. Rasolojaona, R. Seidel² (¹Concept Mihary, Antananarivo, Madagasikara, ²FHI360, North Carolina, USA, ³George Mason University, USA): “Tackling malnutrition by transforming an annual plague into a nutrition opportunity for families in Madagascar”

(2) Yaqi Li¹, Cheng-Hsin Wei¹, Michael H. Green¹, A. Catharine Ross¹ (¹Department of Nutritional Sciences, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, USA): “Unfavorable change in vitamin A kinetics induced by iron deficiency is reversed by iron repletion in rats”

(3) D. Momanyi¹, W. Owino¹, A. Makokha¹, T.-Y. Habte², E. Evang², M. Krawinkel² (¹Jomo Kanyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, ²Justus-Liebig –University): “The Potential Role of Baobab in Food Security in Kilifi and Kitui Counties of Kenya?”

Participants

The main program of the 4th Congress Hidden Hunger consisted of several (political) speeches and a series of scientific presentations and statements given by renowned experts and scientists, stakeholders as well as young scientists. The congress organizers look back on a very successful and multifaceted, international three-day event of rich and diversified contents. In total, 91 speakers including chairs and panelists participated, who helped mediate and present information and results on the topic of the congress. A total of 311 participants from 6 continents and 34 different countries representing 48 German and 77 foreign organisations or institutions joined the congress. Via the congress-owned scholarship program, grants could be given to 12 scientists from Africa and Asia to enable them to travel to Germany and to participate in the congress. According to several feedbacks especially from the scientific community to the congress organizers, the “Congress Hidden Hunger” was again called a trademark. It is still regarded as being one of the most important events on the issue of hunger and hidden hunger.

Overall conclusion

The presentations, discussions and deliberations of the three congress days showed that the data on food systems and malnutrition is generally good thanks to efforts such as e.g. the Global Nutrition Report and the work of IPES-Food as well as thanks to further global assessments in general, the existence and work of global organisations such as e.g. WFP, WHO, FAO and networks, such as e.g. GAIN and SUN. Their previous and regular efforts and activities have contributed greatly to a better understanding and sharing of insights.

The congress made clear, that once moving to hidden hunger and the double or multiple burden or malnutrition in all its forms a broader perspective is needed. This means a broader perspective in terms of countries because it became clear again, that malnutrition is a problem for every country in the world, no matter if the country is rich or poor. Furthermore, as also shown in many presentations, malnutrition is verifiably linked to economic conditions. It is linked to poverty in rich as well as in low- and middle-income countries which leads to the need to focus on the economic dimension, but also on the social and cultural dimension of this problem – a fact that finally means that also a broader disciplinary perspective is needed.



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Several times it was emphasized that it's very valuable to look at the problem from the molecular up to the macro-economic sight. Based on the questions and discussions it turned out that participants benefited from learning from different disciplines. The Congress Hidden Hunger could thus show again the big value of its goal, which among other things was to bring together different disciplines which finally is important for the congress itself, but also for the respective field of study.

The congress also led to the knowledge that as soon as the double or multiple burden of malnutrition is looked at, the different types of actors should be considered as well, not just the consumers or producers of food, such as the farmers or agriculture operators. All actors in between the value chain must be considered, also in particular the food industry. Also when looking at the transformation of food systems it's important to have a debate with all actors. Furthermore, focusing on the solutions it became clear, that also a very broad range of possible solutions should be considered. A big topic of the congress dealt with the question "What do we know about different types of strategies?" Leading authors and scientists who have published important work on strategies presented their work at the congress and gave good insights into the different types of strategies, such as food-based approaches that still remain very important, educational approaches, nudging, as well as the possible need to use regulatory approaches or taxes when looking at the overweight side. Finally, the last and most difficult point that became clear and represents a significant restriction in terms of breakthrough, was that there is a big hurdle in terms of required political economy changes. Regarding the worldwide double or multiple burden of malnutrition as well as hidden hunger and malnutrition in all its forms, political economy changes should take place urgently. The "big economy problem" is, however, to get these topics on the agenda and to make sure that sufficient attention, action and resources are invested for a long time. Political opposition against certain types of strategy is also conceivable. As a result, it may be difficult to bring them on the agenda. Last but not least, the discussion showed that the ideas in the various areas differ widely, which makes political economy changes entirely difficult.

The 4th Congress Hidden Hunger showed that the dialogue should be continued and the above points should be taken into account. Many things are known about hidden hunger and the double burden of malnutrition. Political action has to follow. However, there are also many things which are really unknown - a reason why research and the interdisciplinary debate on "Hidden hunger and the transformation of food systems: How to combat the double burden of malnutrition?" should be continued.

As well as the results of the last two congresses of the series "Congress Hidden Hunger", the results of the 4th Congress Hidden Hunger will be available soon in a book of the series "World Review of Nutrition and Dietetics" published by Karger.

Presentation slides, abstracts, program and background information are available at the congress website: www.hiddenhunger.uni-hohenheim.de. For presentation slides use the password 4CHH2019.

Please note and save the date! The 5th Congress Hidden Hunger is scheduled for 2021.

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