The ‘double burden’ of malnutrition is a growing problem in developing countries worldwide.

Nestlé, the world’s leading Nutrition, Health and Wellness company, is determined to play a part in addressing the dual issue of persistent under-nutrition, and the rise in obesity and diet-related chronic diseases.

Recent statistics revealed that more than a third of children below the age of five suffer from under-nutrition in Sub-Saharan Africa, according to the World Health Organization.

Research network

The bio-fortification programme is part of Nestlé’s Research and Development (R&D) Centre in Abidjan in Côte d’Ivoire.

The centre, which was opened in 2009, is the only of its kind on the continent.

It is supporting local farmers and sustainable agricultural methods through science and technology, and is using raw materials sourced from the West Africa region to develop nutritious and affordable products for consumers in Africa.

“At Nestlé we are strengthening our research and development to produce healthy and nutritious products, while ensuring the availability of safe and, high-quality food.”

Etienne BENET, Nestlé’s Head of the Central & West Africa Region.

Malnourished children may be stunted in growth, have reduced Intelligence Quotient (IQ), and a lower resistance to infection due to a lack of Vitamin A, Zinc, Iron or Iodine.

Micronutrient deficiencies are very common nutritional issues for the population in Africa and Nestlé is helping to tackle this increasing problem by identifying and addressing the different nutritional gaps in diets.

Using information from local governments and international health authorities, the company is adapting its portfolio by adding these nutrients to its products.

Nestlé is also leading nutrition-related initiatives in partnership with other organisations as a way of bridging the micronutrient gap for both adults and children in developing countries.

Bio-fortified varieties

To meet the nutritional needs and tastes of West African consumers, Nestlé introduced a new bio-fortified programme in the region, working together with research institutes, universities, farmers and agronomists.

The company is using conventionally bred crops that are rich in micronutrients, and is cross-breeding them with high-yield varieties to produce high-yielding, nutritious crops.

For example, bio-fortified cassava, millet and maize varieties rich in Iron and Zinc are being grown in Nigeria, Senegal and Côte d’Ivoire. Nestlé hopes to boost the planting and consumption of crops rich in vitamins and minerals specifically for rural populations in developing countries, plus increase the quality of raw materials used in its factories.

NESTLÉ AND BIO-FORTIFICATION

• The R&D Centre in Abidjan has been working on the development of bio-fortified cassava, millet, rice and maize varieties in Côte d’Ivoire, Madagascar, Nigeria and Senegal.

• The Centre is collaborating with national and international research institutions, including IITA (Nigeria); ICRISAT (India) and the Africa Rice Center (Benin).

• The Centre is multiplying crops such as coffee and cocoa using in-vitro technology, while, at the same time, improving the quality of cereals and cassava.

Improving cocoa farming

The Centre is helping renew aging cocoa plantations in Côte d’Ivoire by distributing millions of high-yielding varieties. This is part of the Nestlé Cocoa Plan initiative, which is aimed at improving cocoa farming in West Africa, as well as in South East Asia and Latin America.

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