

**Opening Remarks**  
**High-Level International Symposium on China's Public Nutrition**  
**Policy and Planning: Achievements and Current Challenges**  
**Bruce Murray**  
**Country Director, Asian Development Bank**  
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Vice-Minister Song and other distinguished participants,

On behalf of the Asian Development Bank, I would like to express my appreciation for your participation in this important Symposium. I say that this is an important meeting because good nutrition affects every man, woman and child in China. Good nutrition is particularly important for children, our hope for the future.

The cost of poor nutrition in Asia is very clear. Even excluding longer-term impacts on cognitive development, the effects of malnutrition on worker productivity alone have been estimated to result in at least a 2 to 3% loss in gross domestic product in the PRC and 8 other countries in low-income Asia. This is a staggering cost, equal to at least \$40 billion each year. The costs of micronutrient deficiencies are likely still higher. Of course it is the poor in China and in other countries that suffer the most from poor nutrition.

Like many other Asian nations, China faces new risks associated with over-nutrition – growing amounts of fats and sugars in diets. Diet-related chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes cost the China roughly 3% of its GDP. This is equivalent to about \$30 million. The diseases associated with poor nutrition are exerting growing pressures on the public health system.

ADB's long-term vision is an Asia Pacific Region that is free of poverty. The war on poverty cannot be won unless public nutrition improves. Good nutrition is also needed to achieve the first Millennium Development Goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger.

Today's Symposium includes discussions and presentations by many prominent national and international experts. It presents a unique forum to explore the broad role of public nutrition in contributing to China's goal of achieving a *xiaokang* society by 2020.

ADB has a deep partnership with China. As part of a collaborative effort, ADB's ongoing study for Strengthening National Public Nutrition Planning aims to help firmly integrate public nutrition into national policy and planning, with key nutrition priorities embedded in the Eleventh Five-year Plan for Social and Economic Development. This work is closely linked to today's Symposium.

In 1996, ADB joined with the former State Development Planning Commission (now NDRC) and the Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine (now the Chinese CDC) under the Ministry of Health to advocate for public nutrition improvement as a key national priority. This dialogue was strengthened by China's participation in three of ADB's regional technical assistance projects, which helped identify priority interventions to meet children's nutritional needs, strategies to improve nutrition throughout the lifecycle, and opportunities for public-private partnerships to advance food fortification in Asia.

Partnerships are important. ADB's work in nutrition has involved close collaboration with UNICEF, the leading international partner in nutrition with a sustained commitment to improving maternal and child well being on many fronts. ADB's ongoing work is a continuation of our partnership with the Public Nutrition and Development Center under NDRC and with UNICEF.

I am confident that such partnerships and dialogue will ensure success in achieving our common objective of integrating public nutrition improvement into national development planning. Today's Symposium will highlight lessons from both international experience and China's own remarkable success in combating iodine deficiency disorders.

Thank you all again for your participation in this important event.