

Introduction to this issue of World Nutrition

Climate change is proceeding at a frighteningly rapid pace. In one commentary, Holla and Ittyerah document the ongoing and perhaps worsening agricultural crisis in India, though most of it has other human causes. One point they make is that 1500 wild plants are consumed there, knowledge of which must not be lost as agriculture there and around the world is forced to adapt to climate change. A research paper by Hossain provides a detailed explanation from Bangladesh of the under-appreciated danger of the spread of invasive species (also spurred by climate change) because they have a similar appearance to plants safely consumed or used medicinally for generations.

Two other papers in this issue deal with the implications of emergency situations on infant feeding; these too may be increasing due to climate change. In these situations, apart from extremely old or sick people, who everyone realizes are vulnerable, very few policymakers realize that when people are uprooted or markets become non-functional, the first people to die will always be non-breastfed infants. Gribble and Fernandez provide a literature review with details on how to deal with the needs of such infants. This is extremely complex because of the critical importance in such situations of maintaining and strengthening breastfeeding among those affected. The sudden availability of infant formula can actually harm breastfeeding, putting even more infants at risk in situations where clean water and adequate treatment even for simple diseases may not be available. Kent provides a commentary with some ideas and examples of how the availability of breast milk rather than infant formula could be expanded in such situations.

Another major issue addressed by our authors in this issue of WN is healthy diet. Kent explores a seeming mystery in his Good Question editorial for this issue. How can a food or additive that is novel enough to be granted a patent also be accepted by the FDA as “Generally Recognized as Safe”? A literature review by Salem explores the potential dangers of the huge increase in fructose that has taken place in Western and many low-income country diets. Mialon et al. contribute a unique research paper on conflicts of interest among the people who have been attacking the new NOVA food classification system (which highlights the issue of ultra-processed foods and was described and widely written about in this journal from 2010-16). Mialon et al. name names, examining about 30 professionals who have led these attacks, nearly all of whom have links to the companies that produce ultra-processed foods, whether or not they reveal these links in the 50+ papers they have each published on average. The World Public Health Nutrition Association is leading the way in attempting to raise awareness of the problems caused by such conflicts of interest in the nutrition field. For example, a form that can be used to report on cases you find can be found on our website at <https://wphna.org/conflict-of-interest/report> Pinar and Kasten add aspects to our thinking about a healthy diet, relating it to psychological constructs for happiness, including estimates of estrogen levels as a confounder.

Finally, Museka-Saidi et al. conduct a qualitative examination of one of the critical issues in public health nutrition: adherence to iron-folate supplementation during pregnancy in one district of Malawi. This issue concludes with another letter to the editor celebrating the life of the late John Mason.