

Introduction to the fourth issue of World Nutrition for 2020

Ted Greiner, Editor-in-Chief

From its first issue, the topic of ultra-processed food has been an important one for World Nutrition. In describing WN's coverage of this issue in 2012, its first editor, Geoffrey Cannon, [wrote](#): "The most important factor now, when considering food, nutrition and public health, is not nutrients and is not foods so much as what is done to foodstuffs and the nutrients originally contained in them before they are purchased and consumed."

Carlos Monteiro, one of the scientists who originated the concept, has published about 20 times in WN, nearly always dealing with ultra-processed foods. [Here](#) he describes what it means, defining the concept. (It may not be what you assume!) [Here](#) and [here](#) he explains why food industry reformulation of its junk foods (its main response so far to growing scientific and consumer concern and criticism), will not make these foods healthy. [Here](#) Geoffrey and Carlos respond to a defense of the food industry by the late Urban Jonsson, surprised that he even glides over the issue of infant formula and baby foods, "the most dangerous ultra-processed product of all."

Proof that this quite new way of viewing our food system and the link between diet and health is gaining attention is the attacks now being made on the concept by the food industry. In the current issue, [Monteiro and Jaime](#) describe a particularly malignant attack in Brazil. There the Ministry of Health has issued a national food guide calling for a decrease in consumption of ultra-processed foods. Ultra-processed food manufacturers and the Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply called for this recommendation to be removed. Their article describes what happened next, providing references to a good deal of the growing literature supporting the fact that these foods do indeed harm us.

Not surprisingly, corporate capture of international organizations is another strategy of an embattled industry. [Holla and Schuftan](#) document the alarming progress the increasingly globalized and centralized food industry is making in recent years, including via the "SUN Initiative (now merged with the formerly UN-mandated and uncompromised UN Standing Committee on Nutrition (SCN) to form 'UN Nutrition')."

Three rather unique papers in the field of public health nutrition in this issue of WN emerge from South Asia. One, by [Swati and Ranjan](#), provides a detailed review of the many potential relationships between nutrients/diet and COVID and explores ways in which nutrients may be used in supporting patients. [Biswas et al.](#) examine the diet and nutritional status of waste collectors in urban Dhaka, Bangladesh, finding both to be in poor condition. [Hettiarachchi](#) reviews the widespread lack of awareness and implementation of food laws in Sri Lanka, not just among consumers and the food industry, but even among the officers who job it is to enforce them.

Probably the two best large-scale nutrition programs I saw in many years of working in nutrition in low-income countries involved gardening. In Zimbabwe

(<http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/154251468765877137/pdf/multi0page.pdf>), villages around the country competed to obtain national resources for a large community garden, the goal of which was to reduce young child malnutrition. It did this by offering day care and supplemental feeding to families who were members of the gardening collective and to those identified in quarterly growth monitoring as lowest in weight for age in the village. In Bangladesh, a local NGO, working under the Ministry of Education, provided support for and communication about small-scale gardening to entire populations in several districts in Bangladesh, resulting in a doubling of the number of under-fives who consumed leafy greens at least four times a week (Greiner T and Mitra SN. Evaluation of the impact of a food-based approach to solving vitamin A deficiency in Bangladesh. *Food and Nutrition Bulletin* 16(3):193-205, 1995.). In this issue of WN, [Kent](#) explains how gardening could help add what he has long advocated is the most important ingredient in preventing malnutrition: caring for others in our communities. WN author Stacia Nordin adds a comment at the end of George's piece and they invite readers to follow up, including contacting them with any input they may have.

As professor of nutrition in South Korea, I noticed that adult diets are not only shaped by what we eat in childhood, but by the dietary patterns we establish in early adulthood when we first become responsible for our own food purchase, preparation and consumption. [Angastinioti et al.](#) explore perceptions of the Mediterranean Diet by youth in both one setting in the USA and in one Mediterranean country, Cyprus. Also examining the diets of young people, this time in Turkey, [Celen et al.](#) document the link between their diet, overweight, and problems with attention deficit.

WN strives to be a channel for communication both from authors to the global public health nutrition community, but also in the other direction. Letters to the editor are an important way of doing so. This issue includes two, one from [Schuftan](#), with a response from [Otekunrin et al.](#), both dealing with the critical but poorly understood issue of food and nutrition as a human right. Finally, [Kent](#) submits a book review, asking why the National Academy of Sciences produced a book comparing global infant feeding recommendations. His suggestions range up to the ominous.