

Maplecroft, WFP and BASF release map study assessing global malnutrition and dietary deficiencies – Africa most at risk

African nations, including DR Congo, Niger and Mali, dominate the countries rated as ‘extreme risk’ in five new indexes evaluating vitamin and mineral deficiencies and hunger in global populations:

The indexes, developed by risk advisory firm Maplecroft in conjunction with the UN’s World Food Programme, have been produced for BASF, who is a leader in the field of food fortification. The research includes the Hunger Index; Accumulative Micronutrient and Vitamin Deficiency Index; Iron Deficiency Index; Vitamin A Deficiency Index; and GDP Losses due to Micronutrient and Vitamin Deficiency Index.

The research highlights the ongoing struggle of the world’s poorest nations to access nutrient rich foods to enable a full and healthy life. According to Maplecroft, the compelling evidence is that the combination of the global financial crisis, coupled with recent trends in commodity markets has jeopardised budgets for health and education, as well leading to high food prices. Reduced access to simple but vital micronutrients has accelerated the numbers of people at risk of vitamin and mineral deficiencies, which are estimated to account for 7.3% of the global disease burden.

Yet micronutrients are inexpensive commodities and can be easily integrated into existing food fortification programmes. The studies of the Copenhagen Consensus conclude that micronutrient programming leads to substantial reductions in health-care costs, fewer deaths, improved human capacity and increased economic activity. This demonstrates that micronutrient initiatives can provide a low cost solution to the problems of vitamin and mineral deficiencies, while also delivering a strong return on investment not easily paralleled by other economic or health mechanisms.

In all five indexes African nations feature most heavily in the ‘extreme risk’ category:

- 23 out of top 25 nations most affected by hunger Including: DR Congo (1), Eritrea (2) and Burundi (3)
- 23 out of top 27 nations most affected by micronutrient and vitamin deficiency Including: Angola (1), Ethiopia (2), DR Congo (3)
- 26 out of top 34 nations most affected by vitamin A deficiency Including: Niger (1), Central African Republic (2) and Mali (3)
- 28 out of top 42 nations most affected by iron deficiency Including: Benin (2), Gambia (3) and Nigeria (4)
- 25 out of top 33 nations most affected by GDP losses due to micronutrient and vitamin deficiency Including: Mali (3), Niger (4) and Burkina Faso (5)

“Vitamins and minerals play a crucial role in human growth and development, particularly of children and adolescents. They are therefore vital in maintaining healthy and productive populations,” said Maplecroft’s CEO, Professor Alyson Warhurst. “The indirect costs include a loss of productivity and resultant income due to premature death, disability and absenteeism. In the poorest nations economic losses can be as much as 2% of GDP. Nutritional deficiencies also impact the health of women and children and lead to lower educational and occupation opportunities. Intervention strategies should focus on both improving the status of women, particularly at adolescence and introducing food fortification programmes alongside educational awareness.”

Each of the indexes will be accompanied by an interactive map and the full results will be presented by BASF at the “Addressing Malnutrition at Base of Pyramid” event, scheduled for 8/9 November in New York. The results will also be made publicly available via the BASF and Maplecroft websites.

About Maplecroft

Maplecroft is a leading source of global risks analysis. We research, index and map over 500 risks and issues to identify exposures and opportunities in both countries and companies. Our products and services are a vital resource for businesses and investors requiring analysis and insight into complex political, economic, social and environmental risks.

About BASF

BASF is the world’s leading chemical company: The Chemical Company. Its portfolio ranges from chemicals, plastics and performance products to agricultural products, fine chemicals as well as oil and gas. As a reliable partner BASF creates chemistry to help its customers in virtually all industries to be more successful. With its high-value products and intelligent solutions, BASF plays an important role in finding answers to global challenges such as climate protection, energy efficiency, nutrition and mobility. BASF posted sales of more than €50 billion in 2009 and had approximately 105,000 employees as of the end of the year. BASF shares are traded on the stock exchanges in Frankfurt (BAS), London (BFA) and Zurich (AN). Further information on BASF is available on the Internet at www.basf.com.

