

## **SUSTAINABILITY AND PUBLIC HEALTH NUTRITION: INNOVATION & TRANSFORMATION IN FMCG SECTOR WITH REFERENCE TO UNILEVER AND NESTLE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Public Health Nutrition and Sustainability has become an increasingly significant area of concern within the field of food system worldwide. The adoption of sustainable measures and innovation can create an integrated approach towards public health nutrition. The discussion centers around the importance and significance of FMCG companies as well as governments in creating a sustainable approach. The example of Unilever and Nestlé collaborating with the public health organizations gives some useful insight on innovative approaches adopted to combat the problems of food insecurity and deficiency of nutrients along with sustainability issues. The present paper explores these challenges and outcomes.*

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**Keywords:** Health Nutrition, FMCG Sector, Sustainability, Innovation, Case Studies.

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### **Introduction**

There are various issues associated with the current food system that include climate change, environmental pollution, and health issues such as malnutrition and other illnesses [1]. Sustainability in the food industry revolves around the need to create sustainable systems that provide quality, safe, and inexpensive food with minimum damage to the environment [2]. This paper will explore the link between sustainability and well-being in the context of public health nutrition focusing on innovations and transformation in the FMCG and government sectors [3].

In addition to environmental sustainability, sustainability of food systems is important for the long-term public health benefits as well. It is through sustainable food practices that the problems such as food insecurity, obesity and chronic conditions, which have become key public health problems can be addressed. This study seeks to investigate ways in which sustainable food practices and public health nutrition can be incorporated in an integrative model.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the study include:

- To examine the concept of sustainability in relation to its ability to enhance public health nutrition.
- To establish how FMCG firms and the governmental sector work together to improve food security, nutrition, and sustainability of the environment.
- To review examples of innovative approaches in the production, distribution, and consumption of food in order to ensure sustainability and well-being.
- To evaluate the challenges facing the implementation of sustainable food system with reference to public health nutrition.

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- To make recommendations on how to create a transformative approach for food policies and practices.

### Objectives

- To investigate the sustainability aspects in food system as an important factor of public health consequences.
- To investigate the cooperation between FMCGs and public health sectors to encourage the implementation of integrative public health nutrition programs.
- To analyze innovations in food production and policies that are aimed at sustainability and wellness.
- To define the barriers that can be observed both from private and public sectors on the way to sustainable public health nutrition.
- To provide practical recommendations to enhance sustainability and nutrition of global food systems.

### Methodology

The research methodology adopted for the current research is qualitative in nature, which focuses on using secondary data sources such as academic literature, corporate sustainability reports, and public health policies. The methodology involves the use of case study to understand specific instances of cooperation between FMCG companies and the government in ensuring sustainability of public health nutrition. The research process included the following stages:

- **Data Collection:** Data was collected from sustainability reports, policy documents, and academic literature on public health nutrition and sustainability in the food industry.
- **Case Study Analysis:** The research analyzes two main case studies – Unilever and Nestlé, whose contribution towards public health nutrition through sustainability is discussed.
- **Literature Review:** Academic literature on sustainability, food system, and public health nutrition is reviewed.
- **Thematic Analysis:** Thematic analysis was carried out to understand trends and challenges of sustainability and public health nutrition.

### Discussion

#### • Sustainability and Public Health Nutrition: A Convergence

Sustainability and public health nutrition convergence requires understanding that food systems need to be both sustainable and healthful. Sustainable diets are defined as diets that are environmentally friendly and contribute to improved health conditions by preventing obesity, heart disease, and malnutrition. The global food system is currently leading to considerable environmental destruction, which includes deforestation, emissions of greenhouse gases, and biodiversity loss. In addition, the current food system does not solve the problem of malnutrition, food security, and the prevalence of chronic diseases related to diet [1].

New initiatives for public health nutrition include attempts to minimize environmental impacts and ensure that people have enough food resources of high nutritional quality. Such efforts are realized through collaboration between the public and the private sector, specifically cooperation between FMCG companies and governments on encouraging sustainable healthy diets [2].

#### • Case Study 1: Unilever's Sustainable Living Plan

The company's Sustainable Living Plan is an integral part of the business that seeks to enhance health and wellness along with minimizing environmental footprint. The plan's key points include the initiative to reduce the levels of salt, sugar, and fat in their food products and pay attention to the nutrition element [3]. Additionally, Unilever committed to sourcing 100% of agricultural raw materials in sustainable ways that promote environmental and food security in agricultural communities [3].

Partnerships with public health institutions played an important role in promoting healthier food choices. For instance, Unilever worked together with the World Food Programme on providing fortified food products in developing countries. Such partnerships prove that large FMCG companies have a high potential for contributing to sustainability and public health issues [3].

- **Case Study 2: Nestlé's Nutritional and Environmental Commitments**

For many years now, Nestlé has been an innovator in combining nutrition with sustainability. The CSV philosophy at Nestlé states that their success is based on the health and sustainability of the communities that they serve. In this regard, Nestlé has pledged itself to lowering the amount of greenhouse gas emissions, achieving zero waste in their processes, and enhancing the nutritional value of their foods by lowering the content of salt, sugar, and fat [4].

Through Nestlé's partnership with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Nestlé has engaged in projects that not only enhance agriculture but also address public health nutrition. An example of such a project is the Nestlé Healthy Kids Global Programme that seeks to educate children and their parents on sustainable nutrition [4].

### Findings

The findings from the research show that there are a lot of opportunities for the FMCG firms to actively participate in the promotion of public health nutrition through sustainable approaches. Nonetheless, this process is hindered by the scale of business and complex global supply chain. The findings include:

- **Economic Benefits:** Sustainable food practices allow reducing operational costs over time due to resource efficiency and minimization of waste [1].
- **Health Effects:** Food product reformulation that involves reduction in the levels of salt, sugar and fat has positively affected the state of public health and reduced the number of diet related diseases.
- **Environmental Effects:** Sustainable sourcing and waste reduction practices help in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Barriers:** Costliness of implementation, consumers' resistance to changes and complex supply chain are main obstacles to the realization of these two goals.

### Literature Review

- **The Role of Sustainability in Public Health Nutrition**

Sustainable food systems are necessary to maintain ecological stability and human well-being. As shown in research by Fanzo et al. (2018) [1], global warming creates dangers for food safety and nutrition, thus causing malnutrition. According to Tilman & Clark (2014) [2], sustainable diets such as plant-based nutrition reduce greenhouse gas production and ensure better health in the future.

The World Health Organization (2020) [5] draws attention to the relationship between nutrition and chronic diseases. A nutritionally insufficient diet results in the development of obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases. Therefore, sustainability will ensure food security and protect the environment.

- **Corporate Innovation in Food Sustainability**

Larger FMCG firms are expected to contribute to the construction of sustainable food systems too. As an example, the program of Sustainability Living from Unilever focuses on improving nutrition through reduction of salt, sugar, and fat in processed products [3]. Similarly, the program of Creating Shared Value of Nestle aims at fostering sustainable agriculture and healthy consumption [4].

It is obvious that sustainability strategies of corporate firms have an impact on the health of people. Reduction in disease associated with food by improving the composition of the food is one such case [5]. However, according to Davis & Lopez (2021), [6] these strategies require strong regulatory support and consumer approval.

- **Sustainable Sourcing and Food Security**

The matter of food security depends on sustainability and ethics of the raw materials used. Here, Nestle makes a promise of 100% responsible sources for its raw materials, thus reducing the rate of deforestation and encouraging sustainable farming [4]. According to the research carried out by Fanzo et al., (2018) [1], the use of an agro-ecological approach is very important.

Nevertheless, certain difficulties remain unresolved. According to Tilman & Clark (2014) [2], the transition to sustainable agriculture requires a substantial amount of investments in infrastructural development and technologies, which might be difficult for small farmers to afford. Climate change further adds to food supply chain vulnerabilities, affecting global food availability [5].

### Barriers to Sustainable Public Health Nutrition

Even though advancements have been made in the process, a number of obstacles stand in the way of achieving sustainable food systems:

- **Expensive:** Sustainability requires a financial commitment to renewable sources of energy, sustainable packaging, and fair labor practices [6].
- **Consumer Preference:** Although there is an increasing desire for healthy foods, consumers place greater emphasis on cost than sustainability [5].
- **Supply Chains:** Maintaining accountability within international food supply chains is tough [2].

### Practical Barriers

Even with the benefits that arise from the integration of sustainability and public health nutrition, there are some obstacles:

- **High Cost:** Adopting sustainable processes in the production and distribution of foods entails substantial costs which might be unaffordable by smaller firms.
- **Consumer Opposition:** While there is an increased demand for sustainable products among consumers, there is still opposition to changes, especially on diets.
- **Complex Supply Chain:** Globalization of the food supply chain complicates efforts of ensuring sustainability throughout the process.

### Conclusion

Sustainability and public health nutrition are intertwined, and overcoming the obstacles of food production in today's world involves a collaboration between the private and public sectors. FMCG firms through innovations and cooperation with the government can make huge contributions in the field of promoting healthy diets and sustainable food production systems. But for this to be accomplished, the hurdles associated with costs, consumers' behavior, and the logistics of production have to be surpassed. Through sustained investments in sustainability and public health, companies can contribute towards a healthier and sustainable future.

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