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Small-scale production of weaning foods
Foreword

This Agrodok booklet has been published by Agromisa Foundation. We hope that the information given in this booklet will help people in developing countries in preventing malnutrition among young children.

We are grateful for the support we got from Caritas Nederland in making this booklet. Sasja Kamil and Marianne van Lubek especially have added important improvements while the text was being written.

We thank the writers who managed to finish the text before they went abroad where they will work on putting this theory into practice. Also we would like to thank the people at Agromisa who put a lot of effort in finishing off the publication especially Floor Wolters, Marjoke van den Burg en Hetty van der Stoep who adapted the illustrations and Mechelle Meijboom and Ien Ko who got the tedious job to type and lay out the tables.

Agromisa welcomes readers of this publication to send us their comments and suggestions. Through your reactions we can assure that information given is as relevant as possible. This also enables knowledge to be shared among readers.

The publisher, 1997
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1 Introduction

Malnutrition, mainly affecting children under five years of age, is a common problem in many developing countries. It is caused by different factors, such as:

- lack of food and a low quality of the food;
- lack of time to take care of children by parents and/or caretakers;
- lack of knowledge;
- poverty;
- lack of good quality health care resulting in the occurrence of many diseases.

In addition, inadequate and late supplementary feeding of young children is also an important factor. Breast-feeding is sufficient for most children in the first six months of life. Mother's milk contains all nutrients and sufficient energy children need up to that age.

After six months of breast feeding, supplementary feeding is essential because breast-milk alone cannot provide enough nutrients and energy for growing children. However, this supplementary feeding must be complemented with mother's milk and breast feeding should be continued for as long as possible; preferably up to two years of age.

The period when supplementary feeding is given, the weaning period, is the most critical period in the life of a young child. Malnutrition occurs mainly during this period, caused by: poor quality of the supplementary feeding and infrequent feeding so that the child does not get enough energy-giving and nutritious food.

In many countries young children are given porridge from rice or maize and water. This porridge often lacks the proper nutrients and energy for the growing child. Often, the person caring for the child lacks the time, money and know-how to prepare better infant food.

Several partners of Caritas Nederland in all parts of the world have had good experience with small-scale production of weaning foods.
from locally available ingredients. These weaning foods are an excellent mixture rich in both energy and nutrients, inexpensive, easy to produce, quick to prepare and can be used by anyone, anywhere. It can be used for the prevention of malnutrition in young children, as well as for the treatment of undernourished children.

The small-scale production of weaning foods by itself is not the answer to the worldwide problem of malnutrition. The combination of setting up other activities, such as health and nutrition education, poverty alleviation with the production and sale of small-scale produced weaning foods could help to improve the situation regarding food and nutrition of young children.

We offer this book as a helping hand or guideline to groups or individuals who wish to produce weaning foods on a small-scale base with locally available ingredients or to persons who will guide others to do so.

Chapter 2 contains a general introduction on infant feeding. In Chapter 3 a few guidelines are given on how to arrive at a good weaning food formula, made clearer in Chapter 4 by means of a few sample recipes. Chapter 5 deals with the production process and preparation of weaning foods, and in Chapter 6, management, marketing and financial aspects of the production and sale of weaning foods are dealt with.

Figure 1: Supplementary feeding of a young child (Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute)