

Golden Rice not only tool in fighting vitamin A deficiency, but important one

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.

An expert from the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) says Golden Rice is a potential new food-based approach to help fight vitamin A deficiency (VAD), a form of hidden hunger.

Dr. Violeta Villegas, Golden Rice Project Coordinator for IRRI said “As a breeder myself, it gives me pride and joy to be part of a humanitarian project that seeks to address a major public health problem.”

An estimated 190 million children and 19 million pregnant women are affected by VAD globally, according to the World Health Organization (WHO.)

If one is deficient in vitamin A, the immune system is affected, making them vulnerable to certain diseases like measles and weak eyesight, especially among pre-school children.

“They can go blind. Some may die because they become more susceptible to certain diseases,” Villegas warned.

Lactating mothers also need vitamin A because their milk is their babies’ primary source of nutrition, she added.

“I always say yes, there are interventions like diversifying diet, breast-feeding, fortification and so on. They’re working, but the fact remains that there’s still a sizable portion of our population not reached by these interventions,” Villegas explained. Some of the afflicted live in far-flung barangays (villages), but they eat rice three times a day, so fortifying rice can help.

“It will be very good if there will be an additional tool in our kit, in our toolbox, to complement the existing interventions,” she said.

Currently, Golden Rice is in the confined field trials stage. Multilocation trials will follow and later on, the application for propagation or cultivation will have to be filed.

Read full, original post: Golden Rice promises to be a tool vs hidden hunger, claims IRRI expert