

Nutrition in the Olam Healthy Living Program

December 2021

Olam's stated purpose as a company is to reimagine global agriculture and food systems. As part of this, the Olam Healthy Living (OHL) program aims to improve the wellbeing of people in workplaces and communities where it operates by running initiatives that focus on promoting wellness, preventing infectious diseases and boosting food security and nutrition. A key part of addressing nutrition is aligned to the four pillars of the workforce nutrition, as defined by the Workforce Nutrition Alliance, adjusted to the local situation.



Scope

The initial focus of OHL was on communities and smallholder farmers in Africa. When the campaign expanded globally in 2020, it reached 995,000 people, an uplift of more than 350% compared to 2019. Currently, the programme is active in many countries across all regions, including Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Turkey, Mexico, Guatemala, India and Vietnam to name a few. The OHL activities that promote good nutrition in the workplace aim to help the company reach its goal of providing access to nutrition programmes to 100% of its workforce by 2030.



Motivation

Olam's initiatives to deliver good nutrition to people in the workplace and supply chain help to ensure that the workforce (particularly smallholder farmers, who form a key link in Olam's supply chain) stays healthy and resilient. For farmers, this supports greater wellbeing, productivity and income, and builds supplier loyalty and improves long-term sustainability for the company.



Timeline

Olam's interest in nutrition started in 2011, when the OHL program was launched. At the time, the program was only focused on tackling HIV and AIDS on the African continent, but over the past decade expanded to include other elements, such as the nutrition initiatives. The program is ongoing, with annual campaigns that mobilize individual worksites and supply chains to set action plans each calendar year.



Impact

The company is currently investigating how much of its workforce has access to the nutrition programs, and how many people are yet to be reached. Details on the specific impact of the nutrition programs are limited, But the company is actively working on increasing its data collection through the use of the Workforce Nutrition Alliance Scorecard and by conducting baseline measurements.¹



Motivation

According to Olam, doing business responsibly has been its longstanding ethos, and so promoting the well-being of people in its worksites and supply chains has been baked into their business model from the start. The importance of nutrition has become increasingly evident over the last decade, and nutrition and food security now form a discrete strand of the Olam Healthy Living programme, which also addresses wellness and the control of infectious diseases.

Olam recognizes that smallholder farmers are the backbone of its supply chains: investing in its farms, applying good agricultural practices and producing high yields at good quality is essential. However, too often, smallholder farmers are at risk of malnutrition and ill-health. In addition to the devastating effects this has on quality of life for farmers and their families, it also **increases risk in Olam's supply chain** through potentially lower yields and quality. This in turn impacts farmer family income, educational achievement, community creating a vicious cycle ultimately weakening the supply chain. Investing in OHL helps ensure farmers' access to healthcare and education/training to secure their livelihoods, and creating a sustainable supply chain for Olam.

The company's motivations for promoting **nutrition in the supply chain as a priority** manifested itself in **co-funding [The Business Case for Investment in Nutrition](#)**, a report written by Chatham House², which notes that malnutrition may be costing the private sector in low- and middle income countries as much as **US\$850 billion a year in lost productivity**.

The project

The company's goal is that by 2030 100% of the workforce will be able to access at least two of the following initiatives:

- A nutrition education module as part of standard workforce training.
- Nutrition-focused checks (such as BMI and cholesterol levels) in all employee health checks.

About Olam



Olam is a leading food and agri-business, headquartered in Singapore, with a global team of over 81,000 employees. The company has businesses in many different sectors such as cocoa, coffee, cotton, nuts and spices, supplying food ingredients, feed and fibre to thousands of customers worldwide. Its sales revenue in 2020 was around S\$36 billion.

- Nutritious, affordable food available at all Olam worksites.
- Workplace policies and practices to support breastfeeding.

The OHL campaign started in 2011 with a focus on HIV/AIDS in Africa. Over the past decade, the program has expanded beyond HIV/AIDS and to other continents, for example by launching globally in 2020. Considering factors such as the impact of nutrition on health and mortality in countries where Olam operates, the program has begun to address nutrition as well. The OHL activities that promote good nutrition in the workplace aim to help the company reach its goal of providing access to nutrition programmes to 100% of its workforce by 2030. Olam's program started to address nutrition as well.

The ways that Olam businesses **promote nutrition** is largely determined by the managers and teams working at each factory or supply chain, dependent on local nutrition needs, and in consultation with the company's Corporate Responsibility & Sustainability department. Nutrition is one strand of action among many wellbeing priorities addressed in the workforce (most recently, COVID-19 adaptation and mitigation). Olam's sites are very diverse, so these **initiatives look different in different settings**. For example:

- In Côte d'Ivoire, in partnership with the national [Red Cross Society](#)³, 'train-the-trainer' workshops have been running to equip representatives from

¹ Baseline measurements are data taken before the intervention to establish a starting point. Data taken during and after the intervention can then be measured against the baseline to see if there is progress.

² Chatham House is an independent policy institute and forum for debate and dialogue.

³ The ICRC's regional delegation in Abidjan visits places of detention, supports National Red Cross Societies in their response to emergencies, and assists the authorities promoting international humanitarian law. It adapts its action to each of the countries covered.

⁴ UNICEF is a United Nations agency mandated to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential.

⁵ The World Health Organization is the United Nations agency that connects nations, partners and people to promote health, keep the world safe and serve the vulnerable – so everyone, everywhere can attain the highest level of health.



cashew- and cotton-growing communities with skills in basic **first aid, health and nutrition**.

- Olam's Sustainable Cashew Growers Program (SCGP) in Cote d'Ivoire, for example, has joined with the Ivorian Ministry of Health and Public Hygiene National Nutrition Program, alongside its partners [UNICEF](#)⁴, [WHO](#)⁵, Hellen Keller International and the Government of Canada to help increase coverage of essential nutrition services, like **Vitamin A supplementation and screening for acute malnutrition**. Olam provides funding and in-kind contributions to support community mobilization and logistics, while the expertise, supplements and materials are provided by the government and other partners.
- In the Western Desert region of Egypt, Olam launched a health program in early 2021 that offers **medical check-ups and hygiene training** to local farmers. The check-ups have been particularly effective in identifying those with or at high risk of hypertension and diabetes, which are highly prevalent in the country.
- The breastfeeding aspect of the program is being rolled out in many workplaces, with dedicated, **private space for breastfeeding** being provided in offices and processing facilities in sites in China, the Netherlands, Peru, Singapore, Turkey, the USA and Uruguay. In Turkey, all the workforce in Olam's hazelnut business is trained every two years on the importance of breastfeeding, and in Tanzania the support goes beyond the workforce, with the Aviv coffee estate providing women in the local community with **breastfeeding information and training**.

as the [self-assessment scorecard](#)⁶ developed by the [Workforce Nutrition Alliance](#)⁷, which will help to assess the extent of the workforce's access to the nutrition programs. Fifty one Olam worksites in seven priority countries have so far used the scorecard, covering around 18,400 employees.

Baseline measurements are also being taken in coffee supply chains in central America to provide a better understanding of the nutritional context and initiatives' impact.

- The company's digital 'sustainability insights platform', [AtSource](#), facilitates **improved data collection and collaboration with Olam's customers**. This can be used to share nutrition information as well as provide Olam and partners with a better understanding of issues such as food insecurity and clean water. One example is that the platform has identified areas in which the wellbeing of cashew farmers could be improved. This prompted Olam to survey the nutrition needs of this group, which led to the introduction of new aspects of the company's existing Sustainable Cashew Growers Program, including nutrition education and scaling-up access to essential nutrition services such as vitamin A supplementation.
- With the collaboration of partners, Olam has been able to collect specific outcome-level metrics related to changes in food consumption and nutrition. For example, evidence from Olam's joint program with IFAD and the Government in Nigeria shows that the 5,000 women supported by the program in rice-farming communities improved their diets, eating three meals per day in 2019 against a baseline of two meals per day in 2016.

Impact

Detailed impact studies have not yet been effectuated due to limited partnerships and resources to support such efforts. However, Olam is actively working on increasing its data-collection and reporting to inform programming and measure results. Some examples include.

- The company is working to **understand where the gaps are in workplace nutrition and how best to fill them** – this includes using tools such

⁶ The Workforce Nutrition Alliance has developed a free online self-assessment scorecard which can be used by all companies/organisations, that enables them to assess their current workforce nutrition program and where it can be strengthened.

⁷ The Workforce Nutrition Alliance was launched by The Consumer Goods Forum (CGF) and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), with the aim of bringing access to and knowledge about healthy nutrition to millions of employees in member organisations and supply chains.



Challenges and lessons learned

A key challenge identified by Olam in implementing workforce nutrition programs is **adapting to the specifics of the situation**. Different workplace settings require contextualized responses, which means that getting to scale takes time. Nutrition is often also a new topic for many of those on site with responsibility for the roll-out initiatives, so this may add another layer of awareness-raising and capacity-building.

Another challenge is the **lack of capacity to undertake formal studies into the impact** of the initiatives, so there is a need for more partnerships to increase this capacity. Olam is currently working to improve data-gathering, which will help to create more evidence for the business case for workplace nutrition. More partnerships will help accelerate this and thereby facilitate action for nutrition across its operations.

Next steps

In 2011, Olam set a goal for OHL to reach 250,000 people by 2020. This goal was significantly exceeded with 995,000 people reached in 2020, a 361% increase on the previous year. Olam's goal is that **by 2030, 100% of its total workforce will have access to nutrition programs**. Its work on nutrition prioritises countries where most of its workforce is based and where multiple forms of malnutrition remain high. The company is currently figuring out how much of its total workforce already has access, with 51 worksites across the world having used the Workforce Nutrition Alliance scorecard. A clear understanding of the proportion of the workforce with access to nutrition programs and what those programs look like will be built up throughout 2022. At present, the company estimates that it is not well track to reach its 2030 goal, and might even reach it sooner.

More information and tools

AtSource: <https://www.atsource.io>

Chatham House, The Business Case for Investment in Nutrition (2020)

<https://www.chathamhouse.org/2020/07/business-case-investment-nutrition>

Olam, Unlocking Long-term Value and Driving Sustainable Growth Strategy Report – Annual Report 2020

https://www.olamgroup.com/content/dam/olamgroup/investor-relations/ir-library/annual-reports/annual-reports-pdfs/2020/olam_annual_report_2020.pdf

Olam, 'Olam Healthy Living: promoting wellness through health and nutrition' (blog, March 2021)

<https://www.olamgroup.com/news/all-news/blog/promoting-wellness-through-health-and-nutrition.html>

Workforce Nutrition Alliance Self-assessment Scorecard:

<https://workforcenutrition.org/#/self-assessment>