

A UN success story: Improving Nutrition, Food Safety and Food Security for China's Most Vulnerable Women and Children

"These vegetables are all from my greenhouse. We have more things to eat now, not just pickles and potatoes as in the past. Now we have eggs to eat any time," said Shen Wanshu from Shuitang village, proudly displaying the home-grown produce from his garden – developed with the assistance of the UN-China program to improve nutrition, food security and food safety in some of China's poorest areas.



Picture: Shen Wanshu in his greenhouse.

The *UN/Spanish MDG Achievement Fund Joint Programme on Improving Nutrition, Food Safety and Food Security for China's Most Vulnerable Women and Children (CFSN)* is a partnership led by WHO, working with FAO, ILO, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNIDO, and WFP, along with over 20 Ministries and institutions at the central and local levels.

Through this program which has been run over three years from December 2009 to April 2013, rural households in the western provinces of Yunnan, Guizhou and Shaanxi have been supported to grow more of their own vegetables and other produce, and in doing so, improve the health and nutrition of their families.

For example, rural households were supported to grow vegetables rich in iron and vitamin A, as well as to raise poultry and livestock.

Nutritional supplements were also provided to families through the programme. As a result, prevalence of anaemia decreased by 33.8%, and vitamin A deficiency and insufficiency by 46% in the pilot areas. This intervention triggered a government investment of CNY 100 million (US\$ 16 million) to expand to 100 other counties.

Some pilot food enterprises received training to improve food production practices, and received Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) system certification. As a result of this support, workers at Meiling Food Factory in Guizhou reflected that in 2012 there were no complaints about the moon-cakes made for the mid-moon festival, in stark contrast with the many complaints they had received in previous years. Their orders also increased by 50 per cent compared with previous years!

This very successful project has had a very positive impact on the lives of the poor, women and children by improving nutrition, food safety and food security in six of the poorest counties in China's west – and in doing so helped contribute to the achievement of several of the Millennium Development Goals in China: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; Empower women; Reduce child mortality; and Improve maternal health.

