

►► WORLD PULSES DAY AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

Every food has some potential but some foods are better than others. The interesting thing is that, when one looks at an individual's diet, you definitely need protein, some fiber, and a lot of micronutrients that we are increasingly finding are important for body and brain function. And so we are learning what is required.

Generally, people who eat one or a narrow range of foodstuffs are more at risk of malnourishment than others. The good thing is that much of what we produce in Canada is actually strongly correlated with good nutrition. Our wheats have a broad range of amino acids, vitamins, and minerals that are critical for diets, far better than corn and rice, which have a much narrower range of micronutrients. Our pulses, similarly, have excellent protein, a good amount of fiber, and other materials, but also some micronutrients that are exactly what we need in our diet. Interestingly, canola is often forgotten as part of the diet. You need fat in your diet to be able to absorb many of these micronutrients, and canola oil is a very valuable part of our global oil consumption. At one level we produce grains and oil seeds that are bed rock to our global diet. If we used food pyramids, we would be at the bottom of the food pyramid and the foundation for all the rest. Fruits and vegetables are nice, but they are not the core of a diet.

Meanwhile, the higher order foods like animal proteins depend critically on the byproducts of pulses, wheat, canola and other crops, as the parts that we do not eat become feed for those animals which become part of our balanced diets in most parts of the world.

Canada is well positioned to contribute in very important ways to global food security, and pulses are an increasingly important part

of our contribution. This was affirmed when the United Nations declared February 10 this year as the first world pulses day. We had the year of the pulses in 2016, so the world is beginning to recognize that what we produce is really important to feeding the world. Part of our job is to make sure we remember that too, because in many cases it is a business to us. We are producing a product that generates profit, but to many people this is the difference between an adequate diet that allows them to live whole lives or an inadequate diet that restricts their ability to contribute as producers or consumers in a society.

Implications for policy

These declaratory exercises where days and things are declared, are good signals. They help to remind the world and particular groups in the world, like the pulse producers and the pulse research community, that they are important. Sometimes, they can be influential in encouraging some of the marginal activity or some of the sustained activity that best analyses the research and the development that we do.

"Canada is well positioned to contribute in very important ways to global food security, and pulses are an increasingly important part of our contribution. We had the year of the pulses in 2016, so the world is beginning to recognize that what we produce is really important to feeding the world. Part of our job is to make sure we remember that too"



PETER W.B. PHILLIPS, Distinguished Professor and Director, Centre for the Study of Science and Innovation Policy, Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, University of Saskatchewan

Dr. Phillips earned his Ph.D. at the LSE and practiced for 13 years as a professional economist in industry and government. At the University of Saskatchewan, he was the Van Vliet Research Professor, created and held an NSERC-SSHRC Chair in Managing Technological Change in Agriculture, was director of the virtual College of Biotechnology, and was founding director of the JSGS. He has had appointments at the LSE, OECD, European University Institute in Florence, University of Edinburgh and University of Western Australia. He was a founding member of the Canadian Biotechnology Advisory Committee and was on the boards of Canadian Agri-food Policy Institute, Pharmalytics and Ag-West Bio Inc. He has held over 15 peer-reviewed grants worth more than \$250 million and is author/editor of 15 books, and over 60 journal articles and 55 book chapters.