

International Symposium  
*Research in Applied Nutrition in Developing Countries:  
Challenges and Expectations*  
Royal Academy of Overseas Sciences  
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## Welcome

by

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The interests of our Academy are broad and deal with almost all aspects of development, and particularly development research. One of the underlying assumptions of our Company's thinking and work is that relevant and scientifically sound research, when applied to problems of development, can — and in actual fact often does — help break barriers, suggest courses of action, and prove well-tested responses, thereby contributing to overall development. The results of development research are among the elements (public, private, associative) decision-makers use, or perhaps should be using more often, to guide their action.

The universities in Belgium, and of course the specialized institutions such as the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp, or the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren — to which I belong — are engaged in a wide variety of development research ventures in the South. Many of these projects aim, often explicitly, to strengthen the researchers and the research institutions in these countries. This is indeed another manner of contributing to development: helping the Third World countries to build their own research capacity and becoming more autonomous in the field of research. The present symposium provides a good illustration of this double approach to development through research.

“Applied nutrition research” is an area that lies within development research. We are privileged, at this symposium, that the illustration of this point will be provided by scientists who come from the South. They will show us how they are looking for practical solutions to the nutritional problems that affect the people, first of all the poor, in their countries.

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Nutrition Third World, our partner in organizing the symposium, is fully dedicated to supporting research in applied nutrition and to building capacity in this field. It was a pleasure to be associated with them, and I wish them, on the occasion of their 20th anniversary, many decades more of productive life.

Yet development research in the South still meets severe constraints. We did invite our guest speakers of today to each write a short note about the challenges they are facing and about their expectations — actually the major focus of this meeting. When reading their brief texts, I am struck by the similarity of their perceptions as nutritionists with my personal observations in my own field of research: social and cultural anthropology. Their remarks probably also do apply to other disciplines as well. I am therefore looking forward to participating in the discussions we will have today, and I believe that at the end of the day we will go home, hopefully with a few answers, but certainly with many more questions.