

# press release

## **Malaysian Children’s Diet May Lack Nutrition** ***Embarking on a new survey to unlock further insights into combating malnutrition in the region***

**Kuala Lumpur, 7 November 2019** – The principal investigator of the Southeast Asia Nutrition Survey I (SEANUTS I) in Malaysia, Professor Dr. Poh Bee Koon of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia’s (UKM) Faculty of Health Science, believes that children within the region, especially Malaysian kids, continue to carry the burden of malnutrition.

Despite SEANUTS I having been concluded in 2011, speaking on the sidelines of the signing ceremony between Dutch Lady Milk Industries Berhad’s (DLMI) parent company Royal FrieslandCampina and UKM to formalise the start of SEANUTS II, Professor Poh said children in Malaysia and in the region were still not getting appropriate nutrition in their diet.

She said that the survey in Malaysia showed one in five children were overweight or obese,<sup>1</sup> almost one in 10 children were stunted for their age<sup>2</sup> and one in 20 children underweight,<sup>3</sup> nearly half of the children had Vitamin D insufficiency and inadequate calcium in their diet,<sup>4</sup> and a high proportion of children aged 7 to 12 years old were physically inactive.<sup>5</sup>

“More worrying is the finding that Malaysian children drink on average only half a serving of milk a day, and that only a mere 5% of children actually meet the recommended 2 servings of milk daily,<sup>6</sup> which could have helped them meet their daily calcium and vitamin D needs,” she added.

Professor Poh stressed on the importance of breakfast for all. “It should provide 20 to 25% of our daily nutritional needs.<sup>7</sup> Studies have shown that children and adolescents who habitually consume breakfast are more likely to have better micro and macronutrient intake, less likely to be overweight or obese, and more likely to have higher physical activity levels,<sup>8</sup>” she said.

She also recommended drinking milk as part of breakfast as one of the ways to improve Malaysian children’s nutrition status.

SEANUTS I was a landmark survey that helped shape DLMI’s focus here in Malaysia. DLMI Managing Director, Tarang Gupta said the insights gleaned from this research led to reformulating many of its dairy products to address the nutritional gaps found in Malaysian children. This includes increasing the fortification of Vitamin D and reducing or removal of sucrose or added sugar.



"Results of SEANUTS I were also successfully translated into nutrition and healthy lifestyle programmes for school children like *DrinkMoveBeStrong*, which advocates two glasses of milk and an hour of physical activity a day under the government's school awards programme," he added.

Tarang said awareness of the nutritional gaps have also led DLMI to conduct breakfast campaigns annually since 2016. These were done to encourage Malaysian families to consume more milk.

"Breakfast is the first nourishment our body gets after 8 to 12 hours of fasting from the last meal. It fuels our body and brains by providing the nutrients we need for the day ahead. The United Nations' recognition of milk as being a sustainable food source or complete food, helps prevent the transmission of non-communicable diseases amongst adults and children."

"This is why as Malaysia's leading dairy company, we continuously encourage our consumers to pair milk with their daily Malaysian breakfast, for example nasi goreng, sandwiches or even nasi lemak to make it a complete breakfast meal."

As milk contains a number of micronutrients including calcium and vitamin D, eating a nutritious breakfast that includes milk helps both adults and children meet their daily micronutrients requirements" he said.

Touching on breakfast for school children, Tarang said: "Dutch Lady Milk Industries Berhad supplied milk to children in Terengganu and Kelantan under the Ministry of Education's School Milk Programme from 2010 to 2017; and we want to continue to nourish school children through the Breakfast Programme (*Program Sarapan Pagi*) slated to begin next year."

"A healthy breakfast that includes milk not only help to address the triple malnutrition problem as reported in SEANUTS I, it will also supplement other essential nutrients that Malaysian children are not getting enough from their dietary intake," he added.

SEANUTS I's findings were crucial in identifying the nutritional gaps existing within this region. However, more data is needed to assist all stakeholders in formulating strategies to combat these issues. To that extent, Royal FrieslandCampina and UKM today inked the agreement that paves the way for a second survey to be conducted, SEANUTS II.

Aside from Tarang and Professor Poh, the ceremony was also graced by Professor Dr. Suzana Shahar, Dean, Faculty of Health Sciences, UKM, Professor Dr. Hidayatul Fathi Othman, Deputy Dean (Networking & Income Generation), UKM, and Professor Dr Siti Balkis Budin, Deputy Dean (Research and Innovation), UKM and Dr. Panam Parikh, Principal Expert, Global Development Nutrition, FrieslandCampina & Programme Coordinator, Southeast Asian Nutrition Surveys (SEANUTS I & II).

According to Panam, SEANUTS I was one of the largest and most extensive nutrition and health study done in Southeast Asia, wherein a total of 16,744 children between the ages of six months and 12 years were surveyed. She said FrieslandCampina worked closely



with reputed institutes and universities in Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam, and with UKM in Malaysia to complete the study in 2011.

"We are pleased to collaborate with UKM again for SEANUTS II Malaysia. The second edition of this regional survey will study more than 18,000 children out of which close to 4000 are from Malaysia," she added.

Panam said good nutrition is a crucial factor in the growth, health and development of children. "FrieslandCampina has worked with governments, NGOs and nutrition and healthcare professionals to educate and inspire families about good nutrition and healthy lifestyle to support children's development. We look forward to continuing this dialogue and extend collaborations with SEANUTS II as well" she said.

"This survey will give us the knowledge on the nutritional gaps of children in this part of world and help us to further develop dairy products and lifestyle programmes that address their needs," Panam added.

For SEANUTS II, information will be gathered **on nutritional status, growth, dietary intake, physical activity and biochemical parameters of children aged six months to 12 years. Due to the extent and severity of malnutrition in the region, the survey will put extra focus on gaining insights on protein consumption and nutrition, as protein is a critical building block for children's growth and development.** Results are expected in the year 2021 and will be used to develop country-specific interventions, strengthen scientific knowledge and support government policy.

Reference:

- 1-6 Nutritional status and dietary intakes of children ages six months to 12 years: findings of the Nutrition Survey of Malaysian Children (SEANUTS Malaysia), British Journal of Nutrition (2013), 110, S21-S35.
- 7 Grovenor & Smolin, 2002
- 8 Adolphus, K., Lawton, C. L., Champ, C. L., & Dye, L. (2016). The Effects of Breakfast and Breakfast Composition on Cognition in Children and Adolescents: A Systematic Review. *Advances in Nutrition*, 7(3). doi:10.3945/an.115.010256

**About the survey: SEANUTS I & II**

SEANUTS II is the follow up study of SEANUTS I conducted in 2010-2011. The results of the first surveys reinforced the persistence 'hidden hunger', an important nutrition and health issue in Southeast Asia. The term 'hidden hunger' illustrates nutritional deficiencies that cannot be visibly observed. Overall, the children may appear healthy or even overfed but they may still suffer from a significant lack of micronutrients, such as vitamin D and calcium, which are essential components for their growth and development. The results of SEANUTS I were successfully translated into nutrition and lifestyle programmes to support government policies. The insights that were gained were used to develop our FrieslandCampina Nutritional Standards and led to the reformulation of many products.



**About Dutch Lady Milk Industries Berhad:** Incorporated in 1963, Dutch Lady Milk Industries Berhad (Dutch Lady Malaysia) is a leading dairy company in Malaysia. It is owned by one of the largest dairy cooperative companies in the world, Royal FrieslandCampina NV, a Dutch multinational dairy company.

Dutch Lady Malaysia was the first milk company to be listed on Bursa Malaysia in 1968 and the first to introduce Formulated Milk Powder for Children in Malaysia in 1988. Dutch Lady Malaysia, awarded as the Company of the Year 2014 by The Edge Billion Ringgit Club, manufactures and sells a wide range of quality dairy products for the home and export market, with all products enjoying a strong following in brands like Dutch Lady and Friso Gold.

Through a unique collaboration between FrieslandCampina and four international research teams/universities, the Southeast Asia Nutrition Surveys (SEANUTS I) study was commissioned to study the nutritional status and insufficiency thereof found to be present in Southeast Asian children up to 12 years old.

**Royal FrieslandCampina N.V.:** Every day Royal FrieslandCampina provides millions of consumers all over the world with dairy products that are rich in valuable nutrients from milk. With an annual revenue of 11.6 billion euros, FrieslandCampina is one of the world's largest dairy companies. FrieslandCampina produces and sells consumer products such as dairy-based beverages, infant nutrition, cheese and desserts in many European countries, in Asia and in Africa, via its own subsidiaries. Dairy products are also exported worldwide from the Netherlands. In addition, products are supplied to professional customers, including cream and butter products to bakeries and catering companies in West Europe. FrieslandCampina sells ingredients and semi-finished products to manufacturers of infant nutrition, the food industry and the pharmaceutical sector around the world. FrieslandCampina has branch offices in 34 countries and at year-end 2017 employed a total of 23,675 people. FrieslandCampina's products find their way to more than 100 countries. The Company's central office is based in Amersfoort, the Netherlands. FrieslandCampina's activities are divided into four global market-oriented business groups: Consumer Dairy, Specialised Nutrition, Dairy Essentials and Ingredients. The Company is fully owned by Zuivelcoöperatie FrieslandCampina U.A. with 12,707 member dairy farms in the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium one of the world's largest dairy cooperatives. For more information, please visit [www.frieslandcampina.com](http://www.frieslandcampina.com).