

Researchers work on malnutrition issue in Philippines

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David McMillen, an associate professor of cell and systems biology at U of T Mississauga, has been awarded a \$100,000 grant to investigate solutions to the problem. His project, developed with U of T's Impact Centre, hopes to combine instant ramen – a cheap and popular food staple in the Philippines – with a tiny nutritional powerhouse called spirulina.

According to McMillen, the dish's nutrient value could be drastically boosted with a sprinkle of dried spirulina. The tiny, green algae has long been a favourite of health-food advocates and is cultivated in many places for easy-to-produce nutrition, but is not yet grown in the Philippines. Boasting 60 to 79 per cent protein, spirulina contains high levels of vitamins A, B12 and K, and provides a source of iron that is easily absorbed by humans.

The project plans to produce packets of dried spirulina to sprinkle over commercially available ramen, but McMillen is also working with a partner to produce spirulina-infused noodles, akin to spinach pasta widely available on North American grocery store shelves.