Foreword

This snapshot report sets our perspective on food fortification and highlights the work of our partners in order to effectively employ food fortification as part of a new global food security system. In it we showcase efforts to drastically improve the nutritional quality of the diets of vulnerable and food insecure people across the globe.

Over 2 billion people lack the essential vitamins and nutrients needed to grow and live healthy lives. Without essential micronutrients, such as vitamins A, D, iron, zinc, folate acid and iodine, among many others that we need to thrive, health consequences can range from serious physical disabilities to life-threatening disorders. For example, when a woman is iodine deficient during pregnancy, her baby’s cognitive development is impaired, leading to irreversible effects. Similarly, anemia – often due to iron deficiency – affects nearly one-third of the world’s population and contributes to 20 percent of all maternal deaths.1

Nothing illustrates or makes the case better than fortification of the simplest of foods: salt. By adding iodine to salt – first done by Switzerland and the United States in the 1920s and now practiced worldwide in approximately 140 countries – it has been possible to virtually eradicate goitre and the worst effects of intellectual impairment caused by iodine deficiency.

Over the past seven years, GAIN and UNICEF, along with the Micronutrient Initiative, the Iodine Global Network, governments and salt companies around the world, have worked together to expand better iodine nutrition for hundreds of millions of people who were previously unprotected. We are close to finishing the job of eliminating iodine deficiency at a global scale. We have also made great progress with adding nutrients to other foods and must now extend the reach and benefits of fortification, using foods such as flour, edible oils, rice and even condiments.

WHAT PROVIDES THE BASIS FOR THIS SNAPSHOT REPORT?

Over the past decade, GAIN has delivered an ambitious program to improve nutritional status for some of the poorest consumers in the world by fortifying everyday staple foods and condiments such as flour, salt and oil with vitamins and minerals that help prevent common diseases and contribute to normal, healthy development. With funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and donors such as USAID and the Netherlands, today our programmes reach almost a billion people in 40 countries, mainly in Africa and Asia. These interventions, which follow World Health Organization’s guidelines and have been long established in developed countries, have been delivered under the guidance of national governments in partnership with more than a 1,000 small, medium and large private companies, as well as our partners such as UNICEF, the World Food Program, Helen Keller International, the Food Fortification Initiative, the Iodine Global Network, the Micronutrient Initiative, PATH, and Project Healthy Children and many others.

Together, this represents surely the biggest example of multi-stakeholder partnership at scale in the food and nutrition security arena, and perhaps offers a model for the partnership vision advocated under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Let’s be clear, food fortification alone will not end malnutrition. We need to address such critical issues as food prices, dietary practices, agricultural productivity, and water and sanitation. Interventions for exclusive breastfeeding and complementary foods are the foundation for improving child nutrition.

But food fortification can be a strong pillar of the new food security system: it is a proven intervention, low cost and is relatively easy to implement, because it uses existing food value chains and requires little change in consumption habits. It can target endemic diseases and contribute to improving education and productivity. It is capable of reaching rural areas and the burgeoning urban poor, and the emerging evidence shows that – given the right set of circumstances – it can improve the nutritional intake of the most vulnerable and poor women, infants and children.

This report sets out some of our successes and learnings from a decade-long investment, as well our partners’ successes, and our aspirations for the sector as a whole. It aims to cement the case that food fortification is a vital part of the public health toolkit to achieving food and nutrition security. To make this case, we explore lessons learned on how to build public private partnerships and the enabling environment; improve monitoring and enforcement issues related to harmonising standards across borders; and lay out issues which may influence fortification programs in the future.

Food fortification programs only work through partnerships, globally and nationally. GAIN, together with the Government of Tanzania, the African Union, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement, UNICEF, WFP, USAID and leading global agencies and experts, are working with national partners to map a future for the next generation of food fortification programs. This report is intended to contribute to that discussion, with the aim of elevating the role of fortification in food security, and within the SDGs.

By scaling up and improving fortification programs, we can reach more people. This will achieve greater impact among at-risk populations in low- and middle-income countries. We owe it to the world’s children to invest in their healthy futures today. We invite you to join the discussion and hope you will become advocates to scale up food fortification to end hidden hunger.

Marc van Ameringen
Executive Director, GAIN
Introduction: why fortify?

Malnutrition is one of the biggest development challenges facing the world. Eight hundred and five million people still go hungry every day.\(^2\) Over 2 billion people lack the essential vitamins and nutrients needed to grow and live healthy lives, primarily due to diets consisting of starchy staples that provide calories but not nourishment.\(^3\) At the same time, about 1.4 billion people worldwide are overweight or obese.\(^4\) The double burden of malnutrition is prevalent with 3.5 billion people – or one in every two people on the planet – being malnourished in some form.

Micronutrient malnutrition traps communities and whole societies in a vicious cycle of poverty. Children are unable to learn and reach their full potential, adults are less productive, and household poverty is exacerbated. Often significant proportions of a population are affected by micronutrient deficiencies which go largely unnoticed. These deficiencies are referred to as “hidden hunger” because even mild to moderate deficiencies, undetectable by physical signs or symptoms, can lead to mental impairment, poor health, and low productivity.5

Considerable investment is being made to improve nutrition outcomes around the world, but these efforts take time. Nutrient rich foods are not as accessible as they need to be and many people cannot afford a diverse healthy diet that includes fresh fruits, vegetables, and animal source foods. Improving nutrition involves not only ensuring that diverse micronutrient rich foods are available, but changing consumer awareness and behaviour so that people understand the benefits a diverse diet provides and know how to achieve a nutrient-rich diet. This requires a shift in national food systems. This is not an easy change to make and will require significant investment now and in decades to come.

The good news is that, for large segments of the population, there are proven solutions which can be delivered through existing technology and within the limitations of the current food system.

Countries have been fortifying foods to combat micronutrient deficiencies for over 90 years.

Micronutrients | Function
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Iron | • Major role in delivering oxygen to tissues<br>• Contributes to the regulation of the immune function<br>• Iron Deficiency Anaemia (IDA) can cause extreme fatigue and depression<br>• IDA impacts cognitive development and productivity<br>• IDA can lead to maternal haemorrhage and is associated with 20% of all maternal deaths
Zinc | • Zinc deficiency is characterised by impaired immunity leading to increased infections, dermatitis and diarrhoea
Iodine | • Needed for the formation of thyroid hormone<br>• Iodine deficiency disorders cause goitre (enlargement of the thyroid gland in the neck), growth retardation and mental retardation or cretinism
Vitamin A | • Needed for vision<br>• Vitamin A deficiency is the single most preventable cause of blindness<br>• Vitamin A deficiency increases the susceptibility to infection and impairs immune responses
Folic Acid | • Folic acid is required for appropriate development of the brain and spinal cord of babies<br>• Pregnant women with a low folic acid status are at increased risk of having a baby with a neural tube defect<br>• Neural tube defects are a group of conditions in which the spinal cord does not close properly leading to learning disabilities, paralysis, and babies being born with little to no brain
Vitamin D | • Required for adequate bone health<br>• Modulates the immune system and its response<br>• Vitamin D deficiency causes rickets in children

Food fortification involves adding small amounts of micronutrients to foods, with minimal effects on taste and cooking properties. Staple foods and condiments, such as salt and flour, are typically used in fortification because they are consumed by a large majority of the population, including vulnerable groups most at-risk of inadequate dietary intake of micronutrients. Food fortification uses simple technology while food is being processed. At the processing plant, a micronutrient mixture called “premix” is blended into the product being fortified. At a flour mill, for example – a mix of iron, folic acid, and other micronutrients is added to the flour before it’s packaged and distributed. Vitamins A and D, on the other hand, are fat-soluble so they can easily be mixed in with edible oils.

Food fortification can help hundreds of millions of people have access to essential nutrients early on in their lives so they can reach their full potential. For example, by improving a child’s nutrition it will allow them to do better in school, grow into more productive adults, contributing more to society and improving economic benefit.

Costa Rica has a long history of food fortification, starting in 1958 with adding iron to their wheat flour. The country fortifies a range of other foods, including iodising salt since 1972, and later, expanding to include milk, maize flour, rice, and sugar. An evaluation of the impact of iron fortification revealed a significant decrease nationally in the prevalence of anaemia in children and women. Anaemia was reduced from 19 to 4 percent in children and from 18 to 10 percent in women. In children, iron deficiency was also reduced from 27 to 7 percent. As one of the earliest low- and middle-income countries to implement fortification efforts, the results Costa Rica has achieved suggest significant potential for impact when programs are designed, implemented, and monitored adequately.
FORTIFICATION IS A HIGHLY COST EFFECTIVE INVESTMENT

In addition to being a simple process that uses existing technology and processes, fortification is extremely good value with its benefits far outweighing costs. A 2008 meeting of some of the world’s most notable economists, known as the Copenhagen Consensus, declared adding micronutrients to staple foods as one of the most cost-effective ways to help address the global malnutrition crisis. Additionally, fortification provides significant returns for a low cost. Iodising salt can cost as little as US$0.05 to US$0.10 cents per person per year, but provides a return on investment of more than US$26 in increased productivity and health care savings. In Chile, researchers compared the annual cost of the rehabilitation and treatment for children with spina bifida with the cost of adding folic acid to flour and found that for every US$1 invested in folic acid fortification of flour, US$12 was saved in medical treatment and care. Similarly, in Jordan, iron fortification costs approximately US$0.04 per capita annually while treating anaemia costs $7.00 per capita each year.

The double burden of malnutrition is prevalent with 3.5 billion people – or one in every two people on the planet – being malnourished in some form.
The power of fortification

Since 2008, GAIN has been partnering with UNICEF to improve iodine nutrition through Universal Salt Iodisation in 14 high-burden countries. We are now in an unprecedented position on the verge of eliminating iodine deficiency at a population level, in a sustainable way. According to the WHO, eliminating iodine deficiency would rank alongside some of the world’s biggest public health achievements, like eradicating smallpox. However, achieving this goal around the world, especially among the most deprived countries and populations, requires further work. Iodine deficiency remains the leading cause of preventable mental disabilities globally, potentially causing a 10 point reduction in IQ. Goitre has been largely addressed globally but still persists in some countries in Africa and Asia. The tremendous success of salt iodisation is indicative of the significant potential food fortification holds for addressing micronutrient deficiencies but the world must continue to strengthen and expand its efforts to tackle these issues.
UNIVERSAL SALT IODISATION

Iodised salt is a strong example of the power of fortification. Even though Switzerland and the United States began adding iodine to salt as early as the 1920s, by 1990 less than one fifth of households globally had access to iodised salt. As a result, iodine deficiency disorders were a common public health problem in many parts of the world, affecting more than 2 billion people. Widespread international support for the elimination of iodine deficiency dates from the World Summit for Children in 1990, a landmark gathering of heads of state and government, driven by UNICEF. The Summit adopted a plan of action in which world leaders agreed to a goal of eliminating iodine deficiency. This commitment led to the development of the Network for Sustained Elimination of Iodine Deficiency, a global partnership that included United Nations and donor agencies, scientists, non-governmental organisations, and the salt industry.

In 1994, World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF recommended universal salt iodisation as a safe, cost-effective and sustainable strategy to ensure sufficient intake of iodine by all individuals, and called on all countries to ensure access to iodised salt, regardless of whether they had a documented iodine deficiency disorder. In 2002, the pledge for progress towards the elimination of sustained iodine deficiency was renewed at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children.

Based on these international commitments, global efforts started to increase access to iodised salt. After a slow start, salt iodisation programs gained strength in the mid-1990s and the proportion of people consuming iodised salt increased from less than 20 percent in the early 1990s to about 70 percent in 2000. With increased attention towards ensuring that salt contains adequate levels of iodine, 75 percent of the global population now has access to adequately iodised salt. In line with the dramatic increase in access to adequately iodised salt, the number of countries with iodine deficiency has decreased from more than 100 to only 25. Since putting salt iodisation on the global development agenda in 1990, UNICEF has supported more than 100 countries in the elimination of iodine deficiency disorders.

(Submitted by UNICEF)

We are now in an unprecedented position on the verge of eliminating iodine deficiency at a population level, in a sustainable way.

REDUCING IODINE DEFICIENCY IN ETHIOPIA

As a result of the political tensions and border closures from the Eritrean-Ethiopian War, household coverage of iodised salt plummeted from 80 percent to as low as 5 percent in 2008. In 2005, the Ethiopian government estimated that over 83 percent of school children had mild to severe iodine deficiency, with 40 percent of children and 36 percent of mothers having goitre.

In 2008, a partnership between the Ethiopian government, GAIN, UNICEF, Micronutrient Initiative, and the country’s salt producers, began working to increase the availability and access to adequately iodised salt. The combination of advocacy and technical support from development partners with a motivated Ethiopian Prime Minister and other high level officials, resulted in the passing of new legislation on the mandatory iodisation of salt in March 2011. However, at that time, Ethiopia’s salt iodisation capacity was only able to meet 15 percent of the national requirement. The development partners worked with government and industry to develop a strategy to scale up iodisation. Training was provided to salt producers on iodisation processes, machine maintenance, and Quality Assurance and Quality Control. A revolving fund and distribution system for potassium iodate was established. Salt iodisation across the country started to rapidly increase and as of 2014, 95 percent of households had access to salt with some iodine. However, approximately 43 percent of Ethiopia’s salt is adequately iodised (i.e., to the level specified in the standard) currently, indicating that further progress is still needed to improve the quality of iodised salt.

GLOBAL STATUS OF FORTIFICATION BY VEHICLE
NATIONAL IODINE STATUS

Iron and folic acid are two critical micronutrients that can be added to staple foods, particularly wheat flour, maize flour, and rice, to reduce anaemia, birth defects and other adverse outcomes. Through tremendous efforts in recent decades, 82 countries now have legislation in place that requires processors to add critical nutrients to wheat flour, maize products, or rice. As a result, if this legislation is followed, iron, folic acid, and other critical micronutrients could be included in 30 percent of the world’s industrially-milled wheat flour, 48 percent of industrially-milled maize flour, and 1 percent of industrially-milled rice.

Researchers have estimated that folic acid fortification programs prevented 25% of spina bifida globally in 2012. (Youngblood et al, 2013).

South Africa’s folic acid fortification reduced neural tube defect births by 30.5% between 2003 and 2005 (Sayed et al, 2008).

Oman’s folic acid fortification reduced prevalence of spina bifida from 3 per 1,000 in 1996 to 0.3 per 1,000 births in 2006 (Alasfoor et al, 2010).
OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES OF RICE FORTIFICATION

Rice is the staple food for more than half of the world’s population, including many of those living in poverty. Especially in Asia, many people rely on rice for most of their daily calories, but rice does not provide them with all the vitamins and minerals needed to live healthy, productive lives. Fortifying rice with iron, zinc, vitamin A, and B vitamins could greatly improve human health, potentially reaching billions of people in the Asia-Pacific region, Africa, and Latin America. However, fortifying rice is more challenging than other staple foods, in part because rice is usually soaked and rinsed prior to cooking, risking considerable loss of nutrients.

To address these issues, NGOs and private companies have developed technologies for adding micronutrients to rice flour to create fortified kernels. These kernels are made to resemble milled rice and are blended in very small proportions with milled rice grains. When cooked, fortified rice has the same taste, colour, and texture as non-fortified rice. PATH, a leading global health non-profit organisation, pioneered this technology in the late 1990s.

In 2010, PATH partnered with GAIN to explore ways to scale up rice fortification through commercial channels. With its high levels of rice consumption, sophisticated rice industry, and strong retail channels, Brazil provided the perfect testing ground for developing such a model. Despite the country’s significant economic growth and declining poverty rates, micronutrient deficiencies remain a serious problem, especially among women and children. Working with local rice milling companies, a market-based approach was used to enable the fortified rice supply chain in the country. By April 2015, over 2.7 million consumers in Brazil had benefitted from fortified rice through a combination of market channels and school feeding programs.

GLOBAL STATUS OF FORTIFICATION BY VEHICLE
GRAIN FORTIFICATION

Fortifying flour with critical micronutrients such as iron and folic acid is now mandatory in 82 countries and 1 province*. It is estimated that, as a result of both mandatory and voluntary efforts, 31% of the World’s industrially milled flour is now fortified with at least some iron or folic acid. *Punjab province, Pakistan. Food Fortification Initiative (2015). Global Progress. Available from: http://www.ffinetwork.org/global_progress/index.php. (Accessed 24 August 2015).
OIL FORTIFICATION HAS SIGNIFICANT POTENTIAL TO IMPROVE VITAMIN A INTAKE IN INDONESIA

In Indonesia, vitamin A deficiency affects nearly half of pregnant women and preschool age children. An effectiveness study by the National Institute for Health Research and Development (NIHRD), Indonesian Ministry of Health demonstrated significant potential for increasing vitamin A uptake through fortified cooking oil, spurring the formation of a coalition of government officials, the oil industry association, leading nutritionists, and non-governmental organisations to pursue large scale fortification in the country with a grant from GAIN in 2010.

From 2011 to 2012, a study was conducted in two districts in West Java to assess the effects of large-scale fortification on the vitamin A status of women and children. The results showed that fortified oil helped bring vitamin A intake closer to recommended nutrient intakes, contributing on average 26 percent of daily need for children aged 12 to 23 months, 38 to 40 percent among older children, and 29 to 35 percent for women. The vitamin A status of all beneficiaries improved from 2011 to 2012, as did the vitamin A content of breast milk of lactating mothers. Deficiency dropped significantly during this time, falling from 6.5 to 18 percent to 0.6 to 6 percent.22

Based on these results, Indonesia’s Ministry of Industry mandated oil fortification with vitamin A in 2014, with implementation planned to start in 2016. However, there are still challenges ahead to ensure compliance and meet packaging requirements. The country’s leading role in cooking oil supplier globally provides significant opportunity for their producers to expand their market and become leaders in exporting fortified oil, potentially reducing vitamin A deficiencies in many countries.23

GLOBAL STATUS OF FORTIFICATION BY VEHICLE

OIL FORTIFICATION


MEASURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FORTIFICATION PROGRAMS

Although the efficacy of food fortification is well proven, evidence of the effectiveness of fortification programs has been difficult to demonstrate. Many evaluations are done before implementation issues have been resolved, and it’s difficult to attribute changes in status to fortification in populations where foods are available and purchased in the market.

GAIN and partners developed a Fortification Assessment Coverage Toolkit (FACT) that provides an alternative method to assess the coverage and estimate the potential impact of fortification programs. It was developed to help stakeholders achieve greater program understanding by rapidly assessing who consumes fortified foods and how much. The tool also helps identify program barriers, allowing for the development of evidence-based improvement strategies. The tool can be used in a nationally representative survey, or focus on specific groups at risk of low micronutrient intake, such as specific geographical or socio-economic groups. While evaluations are still needed to assess impact on micronutrient status and functional outcomes, this tool allows program implementers to estimate the contribution of fortified foods to the diet and the extent to which these benefits are reaching diverse segments of the population.

The Senegalese government has been fortifying wheat flour with iron, folic acid and vegetable oil with vitamin A since 2009 to address key micronutrient deficiencies in the population. To assess the contribution of this program, the Cellule de Lutte contre la Malnutrition used GAIN’s FACT tool to determine who in the country consumes fortified foods, how much, and the extent to which the foods were fortified according to the national standards. The survey found that 96 percent of the flour samples collected contained added iron and 97 percent of the oil samples contained vitamin A, demonstrating the significant progress that Senegal made in a relatively short period of time. With 85 percent of women consuming flour with added iron and 73 percent using cooking oil fortified with vitamin A at least once a week, fortification was successfully increasing nutrient intake. Overall, the assessment suggested that fortification in Senegal reaches women of reproductive age living in rural areas and those classified as living in poverty, thus those most likely to suffer from deficiencies.
Key factors for impact through fortification

Although adding nutrients to food is a relatively simple process, there are technical, social, and economic challenges associated with implementing successful fortification programs in low- and middle-income countries. Several decades of fortification efforts in low- and middle-income countries have provided key lessons for scaling up to achieve maximum impact.
THE IMPORTANCE OF CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

To overcome these challenges and achieve impact, cross-sector partnerships that are able to successfully mobilise the international community, while simultaneously driving progress at a national level, are essential. A strong national fortification alliance can: provide strategic direction around a common agenda; set up shared measurement and learning systems; support the activities of the different partners; and facilitate communication.24 Providing leadership while building ownership among the different partners involved, national alliances use each partner’s strengths and assets while accomplishing shared goals.

ENHANCING THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Advocacy efforts to raise awareness of the effects of micronutrient deficiencies and the benefits of fortification programs are essential to generate the political will to make long-term commitments to effective fortification efforts. Successful fortification programs require both strong government leadership and a motivated private sector. The private sector is usually willing to engage in fortification as long as there is a level playing field. Consumer demand for nutritious products is limited in low- and middle-income countries where many food products aren’t branded or packaged. Companies often want mandatory fortification to ensure that they all incur equitable costs. This needs adequate monitoring from all governments. By mandating fortification through legislation and providing adequate enforcement, governments can provide a common set of rules. Mandatory fortification has been shown to reach a higher proportion of the population and resulting health benefits are distributed more evenly.26

ADVOCACY FOR PARTNERSHIPS TO PREVENT BIRTH DEFECTS AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Every day, 60 million women are at risk of having a baby born with spina bifida. Actors Boris Kodjoe and his wife Nicole Ari Parker know first-hand about spina bifida and its effects because their daughter, Sophie, was born with the condition. A birth defect, spina bifida can affect a child’s brain, their ability to walk, bladder control, and other bodily functions.

To promote its prevention and to further research on improving healthcare and the quality of life for children and adults living with spina bifida, they founded Sophie’s Voice Foundation. Through the foundation, they advocate to improve the lives of children around the world by preventing neural tube birth defects. Research has shown that 400 mcg of folic acid taken daily prior to conception and in the first three months of pregnancy can reduce the risk of having a baby with spina bifida by as much as 70 percent. As part of their efforts to inform the American public, the foundation visits hospitals around the world and meets with government officials to increase the efforts to fortify the food system to prevent spina bifida.

In December 2011, the foundation helped establish the Center for Spina Bifida Research, Prevention, and Policy at Emory University in Atlanta. In partnership with the Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta and Emory University School of Medicine, and the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory, the center provides national and international leadership in healthcare for individuals with spina bifida with the ultimate goal of eliminating folic acid-preventable spina bifida globally. Through their advocacy efforts, Kodjoe and Parker are pushing for US and International leadership and technical assistance in saving thousands of children around the world from dying or becoming disabled unnecessarily from birth defects and developmental disabilities.25

(Submitted by Sophie’s Voice Foundation)

25 For more information, please visit: http://sophiesvoicefoundation.org/
ADVOCATING FOR MANDATORY FORTIFICATION

The Food Fortification Initiative has been advocating for mandatory fortification since the early 2000s. In addition to its own advocacy efforts, they have created a communications toolkit to share the lessons they’ve learned along the way with consumer groups, national and international organisations, and governments around the world.

Any fortification advocacy efforts require building a consensus among multi-sector stakeholders and must extend to any influential groups that people trust. For example, in countries where flour or rice is being fortified with folic acid, doctors who treat children need to understand that fortification can prevent neural tube defects such as spina bifida. These doctors may then use their influence to support fortification efforts. In the Solomon Islands, the religious community is very influential. Therefore the Solomon Islands Food Fortification National Committee includes leaders of faith-based organisations in its advocacy efforts. In other countries, vendors who sell fortified foods may influence consumers, and these vendors are key advocacy audiences.

It is essential to extend advocacy beyond education. Creating awareness of the value of improved nutrition or the healthcare savings of preventing vitamin and mineral deficiencies is helpful, but leaders must also be persuaded to take action. For example, in the 1990s, despite scientific findings that folic acid would prevent most neural tube birth defects, the US government agency responsible for fortification standards took no action. Eventually the March of Dimes, a national advocacy group working to prevent birth defects, persuaded the authorities to include folic acid in the US. mandatory grain fortification program. As a result, folic acid is estimated to prevent 1,000 neural tube birth defects each year in the US.28

(submitted by the Food Fortification Initiative)
CARGILL INDIA FORTIFIES EDIBLE OILS WITH VITAMIN A

Just as critical as generating the political will to support food fortification is getting industry buy-in. Some companies make the decision to fortify when it’s voluntary out of a social responsibility, or with the hope of gaining a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

After the state of Gujarat, in India, mandated fortification for edible oils produced and sold in the state, in 2008, Cargill India decided to fortify all of their oils across the country rather than limiting their efforts to just one state. To remain competitive and emphasise the social benefits behind the program, the company did not pass the cost of fortification on to the consumer but instead focused its efforts on generating demand for fortified products. Despite the lack of government incentives and the low consumer demand for fortified products, Cargill worked to create awareness about meeting daily nutritional needs, strengthen distribution channels, and introduce financially sustainable models for fortification, paving the way for the private sector to take the lead in oil fortification in India. After a few years, retailers began to experience a 10-20 percent increase in sales of Cargill’s fortified oils, demonstrating the potential for private sector initiative.

PRIVATE SECTOR TAKES THE LEAD ON FORTIFICATION EFFORTS IN BURUNDI

To address high rates of undernutrition, anemia, and vitamin A deficiency in Burundi, the government took steps to implement a national food fortification program with support from Project Healthy Children. In 2011, Burundi put fortification on the national agenda and adopted the East African Community’s fortification standards. A National Fortification Alliance was formed to build support among the various public and private sector stakeholders.

When political turmoil delayed the signing of the legislative decree that would make fortification mandatory, the private sector forged ahead anyway. Premix companies DSM Nutritional Products and BASF donated the initial vitamin A premix and testing equipment needed for Burundi’s only cooking oil facility, Savonor, to begin fortifying cooking oil. The Burundi Bureau of Standards began to work closely with industry staff to establish internal monitoring systems to ensure compliance with the national cooking oil standards. Fortified oil can already be found in markets throughout the country and is also being provided to the capital’s internally displaced people. Burundi’s sugar industry has placed its first order for premix as well and plans to move forward with their fortification efforts. More work is needed to get fortification legislation passed and build an effective national monitoring system in the country, but the high level of commitment shown by the private sector in Burundi is promising for successful fortification efforts.

Folic acid is estimated to prevent 1,000 neural tube birth defects each year in the US.

27 For more information, please visit: http://www.ign.org.
For more information about advocacy and communications for fortification, please visit: http://www.ffinetwork.org/plan/Communications.html.
30 For more information, please visit: http://projecthealthychildren.org/where-we-work/burundi/.
GLOBAL STATUS OF FORTIFICATION BY VEHICLE IMPACT OF USI AND FORTIFICATION WITH FOLIC ACID AS STRATEGY FOR PREVENTION IS STRONG

SALT IODIZATION AND IDD

- Due to USI, iodine deficient countries decreased from 54 to 32 from 2003 to 2011.
- Household use of adequately iodized salt at 75% in 2012 in developing countries, up from 61% in 2002.
- GAIN’s USI programs with data (9 countries) have increased from 72% coverage (2009) to 80.3% (2014)


Continuous attention and investment by governments in monitoring and enforcement is essential for long-term impact.
INVESTING IN MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT

Mandatory legislation without effective regulatory monitoring is unlikely to be successful. External quality assurance and quality control results from GAIN-supported fortification programs in 25 countries show compliance rates (fortification according to national standards) that range from 18 to 97 percent, with an average of 45 to 50 percent. While this does not provide a comprehensive assessment, it does indicate a systemic problem with compliance. In addition, many of these non-compliant fortified foods are labelled as compliant, thus misleading consumers on vitamin and mineral content. Fortification programs will achieve limited health impact when foods are not adequately fortified.

While much of the expense associated with implementing fortification programs comes in the form of up front capital investments (often provided by external donors), enforcement is a recurring cost that the government bears continually over the lifespan of a fortification program. Resource allocation for monitoring and enforcement tends to be under-budgeted, often due to competing demands for scarce resources or a lack of prioritisation of this critical component of fortification. In addition, even where capacity and resources exist, there can be political risk in enforcing compliance due to resistance from interested groups. Both industry and the government rely on effective quality control regulations and systems – including a good laboratory system and inspectorate – to ensure that fortified foods consistently meet national standards. Continuous attention and investment by governments in monitoring and enforcement is essential for long-term impact.

IMPROVED MONITORING IN GHANA USING PORTABLE TESTING DEVICES

Capacity to test fortified foods for micronutrient content is not always available in many low- and middle-income countries. Sending samples to a central facility or abroad can take several months, and delays can lead to non-compliant products being distributed to markets. For countries with significant imports, border control inspectors play an important role in enforcing compliance. Unfortified food coming into the country deters local food producers and threatens the effectiveness of the programs. With the technical advances of portable devices to measure vitamin content, inspectors are able to quickly obtain compliance results, which can facilitate monitoring.

In 2010, GAIN supported the introduction of a portable rapid test device, the iCheck Chroma®, a field-friendly, low-cost tool for officials to test for vitamin A at the port of entry. This allowed for quantitative results to be obtained almost instantly, facilitating quick decisions on compliance. It also improved the credibility of the Ghana Food and Drugs Board and customs officials by avoiding import delays. In the year after the portable testing device was introduced, data from the use of these devices show that the percentage of adequately fortified vegetable oil increased from 69 to 95 percent.

IMPROVING COMPLIANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa enacted mandatory fortification of maize meal and bread flour in October 2003 and by 2008, more than 45 percent of the population were estimated to be consuming fortified wheat flour and 67 percent were consuming fortified maize meal. However, despite showing significant reductions in Neural Tube Defects, the reduction in vitamin and mineral deficiencies was limited.

A subsequent review found compliance to be low by all millers, suggesting weak regulatory monitoring and milling practices and suboptimal impact. Fortification standards needed updating: although the fortification levels were initially established according to WHO guidelines, the WHO later went on to both increase their recommended micronutrient levels as well as recommend using a different type of iron than the one used in South Africa’s program. Also, because South Africa’s mandatory fortification only applied to bread flour and not cake flour, the consumption of non-fortified cake flour may have had an impact on the effectiveness of the program as well.

In 2013, South Africa began to address these issues through special studies, with financial and technical support from GAIN, including for an industry study on recommendations to optimise processes to improve milling quality and streamline the program’s monitoring system, as well as a sensory study. Premix trials using the revised WHO formulation are expected to be completed in October 2015. These results, along with the recommendations of the mill variability study, will inform the National Department of Health to finalise the amendment to the fortification regulation in order to update the micronutrient formulation, issue revised monitoring processes and, potentially, add cake flour to the fortification program.
HARMONISING FORTIFICATION STANDARDS ACROSS ECONOMIC ZONES

Using the same standards and regulations across borders can ease some of the challenges low- and middle-income countries face in implementing effective food fortification programs. It can encourage regional trade, expands the size of the market for fortified foods, and facilitate improved quality of fortified products.34 By raising the profile of fortification, regional efforts can also help increase awareness on the consumer side and catalyse advocacy efforts for legislation. Ongoing efforts through the West African Economic and Monetary Union and Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS) have sparked a harmonisation process in West Africa that demonstrates the potential for approaching fortification regionally. Harmonisation initiatives are also currently in progress in East Africa and Central Asia.

IMPROVING RURAL HEALTH AND NUTRITION THROUGH SMALL-SCALE FORTIFICATION

Many food industries in low- and middle-income countries are made up of a vast network of small producers, which makes fortification more difficult. By providing technical support and addressing the unique challenges small and medium-sized businesses face in fortifying foods, fortification efforts can actually be beneficial for economic development in rural areas while providing people with the essential vitamins and minerals they need to thrive.

A REGIONAL APPROACH TO FORTIFICATION IN WEST AFRICA

The countries of West Africa rank among the highest in the world in under-five mortality, at an average of approximately 142 per thousand live births.35 More than 42 percent of preschool age children in West Africa are vitamin A deficient.36 West Africa has the among the highest prevalence rates of anaemia among women of reproductive age worldwide.37

After four years of advocacy efforts by nutrition partners, Helen Keller International facilitated negotiations with the Professional Association of Cooking Oil Industries, which adopted a resolution to fortify all cooking oil produced by their 15 member industries with vitamin A. In 2006, the countries of ECOWAS passed a resolution to begin mandatory fortification of vegetable oil and wheat flour in the region, providing strong political support to expand the existing national fortification initiatives to all countries in the region. The Tache d’Huile initiative was launched in 2007 to increase vitamin A intake, facilitate the marketing of fortified vegetable oil, and establish regional standards and regulations. Building on the regional initiative for fortified cooking oil, the Fortify West Africa initiative was launched later in 2007 to promote the fortification of wheat flour.

Ten of the 15 member states have passed mandatory legislation for fortification and all major industries in the region are now participating in fortification efforts. Current estimates indicate that the fortified foods are reaching 55 million people in the region, including 8 million children under five and 6 million pregnant or lactating women.38 However, legislation still differs in each country, impairing trade and making enforcement difficult in the region. For countries that rely on cooking oil imports (especially Guinea, which has no large-scale manufacturer and imports all of its cooking oil), harmonised standards and regulations would allow for equitable access to fortified foods throughout the region and ensure that the foods meet quality standards whether they’re produced locally or imported.39

(Submitted by Helen Keller International)
SOURCING QUALITY AFFORDABLE PREMIX

One of the principal challenges industries face as they begin fortification efforts is sourcing high quality premix of vitamins and minerals. Prices and quality of premix can vary significantly, making it difficult for companies to assess the quality, ensure they’re getting a good price, and finance the advance purchase of their premix. Because premix is typically imported, procurement can be risky and cost-prohibitive especially with high customs taxes and fluctuating exchange rates. More than three months of lead time can be required to procure premix internationally, which is especially difficult for small and medium-sized producers who have a hard time anticipating their premix needs. Ensuring low-cost, quality premix which can be procured, stored and distributed locally, is essential to achieving sustainable and timely access to premix.

SMALL-SCALE FORTIFICATION IN TANZANIA

In some countries, those living in rural and remote areas do not have regular access to centrally processed foods. It is often specifically these groups who might benefit the most from food fortification as their intake of essential nutrients may be constrained by the availability and affordability of micronutrient rich foods. In these regions, it has been estimated that 50 to 90 percent of consumers depend on small to medium-scale milling to process staple foods.

Efforts to fortify in these small facilities have faced numerous challenges. Because operations are manual, they have difficulties ensuring accurate dosages of micronutrients. In addition, there are very limited distribution channels, and fortification places significant financial burden on these small millers. To address these challenges, Sanku Fortification designed a technology and business model for village-level mills to fortify effectively. Using this, in a pilot of 45 small scale mills in Tanzania, 160,000 people are reached daily with fortified maize flour. Sanku forecasts that by 2017 it will have 350 dosifiers installed, and by 2018 it is estimated that its fortified foods will be available to 7 million people daily in Tanzania. Through the implementation of a scalable, cost effective, and proven business model, Sanku’s goal is to provide fortified foods to over 200 million people around the world by the year 2020.

SUPPORTING SMALL-SCALE IODISATION FOR GREATER HEALTH IMPACT IN SENEGAL

Senegal is considered to be the most important salt producing country in West Africa, and their salt is sold throughout the region. In Senegal, like many low- and middle-income countries, much of the salt industry is made up of 10s of 1,000s of small harvesters and processes. The Micronutrient Initiative and its partners have supported these small scale salt harvesters for over 10 years, with activities such as helping them to organise into cooperatives while providing technical support for iodisation and revolving funds for the potassium iodate needed to adequately iodise salt as part of the organisation’s efforts to reduce iodine deficiency disorders (IDD). This allows them to pool resources, build solid business models, and attract investment by financial institutions. Micronutrient Initiative Senegal also works with the Ministry of Trade to expand the regional market for salt in a way that supports economic development while increasing access to iodised salt for the most vulnerable. Successful iodisation in Senegal can help reduce IDD both within the country and throughout the region.

(submitted by Sanku)

(submitted by the Micronutrient Initiative)
GAIN’S PREMIX FACILITY

The GAIN Premix Facility (GPF) was established in 2009 to provide certified quality premix at an affordable cost. It makes sourcing premix easier for businesses by delivering certified quality premix, competitive prices, financial assistance, and a simple process to ensure that a lack of premix does not prevent companies from fortifying their products.

To date, the GPF has a pool of 21 certified premix blenders and 38 certified micronutrient suppliers. Within six years of operations, the facility has sourced approximately $51 million worth of premix and micronutrients to 43 countries, and the fortified food is estimated to be eaten by over 150 million people every year.

In Ghana, the GPF helped establish a distributor as salt producers have struggled to access a reliable source of potassium iodate – a barrier in past efforts to iodise salt effectively. The GPF developed a supply model which reliably delivers small pack sizes of affordable, good quality potassium iodate to any producer’s doorstep within 24 hours. “It is a relevant and effective solution to some longstanding problems,” says Andrew Quashie, Project Coordinator of the local distributor in Accra, Ghana.

TEMPORARY SUBSIDIES FOR PREMIX EASE LARGE INDUSTRIES INTO FORTIFICATION

Following Tanzania’s introduction of mandatory food fortification in 2013, 13 large scale food manufacturers are fortifying wheat flour and vegetable oil. While a significant amount of maize meal is milled in villages (see page 21), wheat flour and vegetable oil is only processed in large mills, so these vehicles reach the majority of the Tanzanian population. In order to integrate fortification into the milling process, large industries needed to incorporate fortification into their operational plans and budgets. With the support of GAIN and the Department for International Development (DFID), HKI provided large industries with a sliding scale subsidy for vitamin and micronutrient premix for the first one and a half years of fortification. This support helped build ownership while ensuring sustainability. Under this scheme, the program subsidised 45 percent of the cost of premix for the first six months, decreasing to 20 percent after one year, and ending with no subsidy after one and a half years. This arrangement allowed industries to absorb premix costs over time to achieve 100 percent sufficiency without having a significant impact on their operating costs or increasing costs to the consumer.

(Submitted by Helen Keller International)

USING DATA TO IMPROVE FORTIFICATION PROGRAMS

Better tracking of production, quality, and movement of fortified foods helps to identify gaps and trigger corrective steps to improve programs. Therefore accurate and up-to-date information and statistics are useful for programs to continuously adapt, address bottlenecks, and achieve impact.

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22 For more information, please visit: http://gpf.gainhealth.org/
Better tracking of production, quality, and movement of fortified foods helps to identify gaps and trigger corrective steps to improve programs.

INNOVATIVE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TOOLS FOR TRACKING PROGRESS IN INDIA

Although India was one of the first countries in Asia to implement mandatory salt iodisation in the 1960s, they stopped mandating iodisation of salt in 2000, leading to dramatic decreases in the consumption of iodised salt. By 2005, only half of the households in the country were consuming iodised salt.

In 2005, the legislation was reinstated and the Indian government began a renewed effort towards reducing iodine deficiency, with an emphasis on reaching remote populations in rural areas that are less likely to consume iodised salt. Despite the return to mandatory legislation, ensuring quality across the supply chain proved difficult. India has over 13,000 producers and the delivery network is extremely complex, making monitoring challenging.

Working with national and international partners, GAIN and India’s Salt Department developed an innovative management information system to track the iodine levels of salt being distributed across the country. This online platform allows for centralised data collection that can increase the department’s efficiency and allow program managers to make changes to the program to facilitate better access to iodised salt among at-risk people. Industry regulators are now using these innovative tools to track iodisation in real time. These tools can be easily customised for any country and have significant potential to help governments effectively monitor quality of fortified foods.
Food fortification with vitamins and minerals: the way forward

Food fortification is a powerful tool in increasing micronutrient intake and has contributed to the virtual elimination of some life-threatening diseases and conditions in developed countries. Fortification has also gained significant traction in low- and middle-income countries. Governments, industry, and civil society have now come together to implement salt iodisation programs in more than 140 countries worldwide; there are 83 countries that have mandated at least one kind of cereal grain fortification; 20 countries have large fortification programs focusing on edible oils; and nearly a dozen countries fortify condiments.
These figures represent tremendous success in scaling up a proven, highly cost effective and sustainable nutrition intervention. However, if we are going to achieve long-term impact, together we must make sure fortification programs remain relevant by gaining better understanding of the dietary gaps we seek to fill, including addressing changing consumption trends, and by filling critical gaps in programming and evidence in order to expand fortification as needed to new countries and food vehicles as well as improve and sustain existing fortification efforts.

**URBANISATION, CHANGING FOOD SYSTEMS, AND VOLATILE FOOD PRICES**

The changing global food and nutrition landscape means we must continuously adapt our efforts to prevent micronutrient deficiencies and ensure that these efforts are sustained. Global food prices are becoming increasingly volatile. Historical trends show that when food prices are high, people tend to consume more staples and less diversity of nutritious foods. To ensure that people get critical micronutrients fortification remains essential.

Africa and Asia are urbanising faster than any other region in the world. African cities will be home to over 450 million new residents by 2040, with half of the population projected to be living in urban areas. At the same time, the food industry is undergoing rapid transformation in countries like India, Nigeria, Kenya, and others, moving from a largely informal fragmented marketplace to a much more commercial and consolidated system. Along with income growth and urbanisation, these changes in the food system are beginning to drive a dietary transition with processed, ready-to-eat, and animal-source foods becoming increasingly important components of people’s diets. Especially for poor households, the increased diversity of foods could increase regular dietary intake of essential nutrients, but also tends towards high consumption of fat, salt, and sugar with associated risks. The results of the so-called nutrition transition, both continued nutritional deficiencies and the growing prevalence of overweight and obesity are already highly evident in many low- and middle-income countries often affecting poor and non-poor. As industry and infrastructure expand and facilitate greater access of the population to markets, it is critical that both issues be simultaneously addressed.

As the food sector in these countries begins to shift towards a more industrial environment with staple foods processed at scale, it appears that large-scale fortification remains relevant as a critical tool to close the micronutrient gap. By leveraging these rapidly developing supply and delivery channels, countries can take advantage of the consolidation taking place to improve and, if needed, expand large-scale fortification efforts.

**NEW FORTIFICATION APPROACHES EMERGING**

The processed food industry often uses salt, wheat flour, and edible oils as ingredients. If these foods are adequately fortified, their contribution to regular consumption of micronutrients can be significant. For example, in Indonesia one pack of instant noodles using fortified wheat flour would provide around 50 percent of the recommended iron intake for children four to six years of age and 10 percent for women of reproductive age. Using iodised salt in instant noodles, soup stock, and soy sauce in the country could contribute nearly 20 percent of the recommended daily allowance for iodine for adults. Similarly, fortification efforts are expanding to condiments and seasonings, including soy and fish sauces, curry powders, and bouillon cubes. With eating habits changing, fortifying items such as bouillon cubes could mean there is potential to reach a greater number of people in resource-poor settings. In Senegal, a random sample of bouillon cubes tested for iodine content would have delivered between 7 and 115 percent of daily iodine needs in urban areas and half of this amount in rural areas. This wide range of iodine levels in the salt used in bouillon calls attention to the need for improved monitoring and regulation.

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In Indonesia one pack of instant noodles using fortified wheat flour would provide around 50 percent of the recommended iron intake for children four to six years of age.
CRITICAL GAPS IN FORTIFICATION NEED ADDRESSED TO ACHIEVE POTENTIAL

After setting the goal of eliminating iodine deficiency worldwide at the United Nations World Summit for Children in 1990, countries around the world have made significant investments in implementing salt iodisation. The investment has been a clear success. Through Universal Salt Iodisation and other iodine interventions, there are now only 25 countries identified as having insufficient iodine intakes.50 This is down from 54 in 2003. We are now in an unprecedented position: on the verge of being able to eliminate iodine deficiency at a population level, in a sustainable way.

Similarly, if all current industrially milled wheat flour were to be fortified with folic acid according to WHO guidelines in 18 countries in Africa and Asia, it is estimated that over 50,000 NTDs could be prevented annually through fortification in these countries.51 Through fortification with iron, if a country follows WHO guidelines and the right factors are in place, we can expect to achieve a 2.4 percent reduction per annum in anaemia.52

These impressive potential outcomes related to iodine, folic acid and iron, can only be achieved when gaps in fortification programs are addressed in a sustainable way. Firstly, improved legislation, regulations and enforcement regimes are needed to ensure clear and consistent mechanisms are in place and to raise overall compliance of fortification programs which currently appear low.53 Regulation on paper will not improve fortification compliance without real incentives as well as strong consequences which drive under-fortified foods out of markets. Effective regulatory monitoring and enforcement will notably require more robust national budget allocations. There is a need for more inspectors, more training, and improved laboratory micronutrient testing capacities. Resources must be applied strategically and focus on essential proven elements of monitoring fortification programs.

Secondly, and related to the first gap in fortification programming is improved quality assurance and quality control (QA/QC) measures at industry level. In many countries, there is low capacity among industries to fortify with consistent quality (especially among small- and medium-size industries). Ongoing training according to good manufacturing practice and micronutrient fortification and testing is required.

Thirdly, further investment by donors is needed to expand, improve, measure and sustain fortification programs. One 2015 costing estimate for 25 developing countries puts the total donor investment needed to build, improve, and sustain programming for multiple food vehicles over the next 15 years between US$120-US$150M.54

54 GAIN. (2015) Draft 2 of a cost model developed in the build up to the Global Summit on Food Fortification, September 2015.
Fourthly, there is a need to generate more evidence to guide fortification policy and program design. Critical gaps in data to inform nutrition priorities, including fortification interventions, remain. For example, there is a lack of detail of foods consumed by various target groups, limiting our understanding of potential food vehicles and quantification of the dietary gap we must address for some nutrients. There are tools available which need to be used more often in program design, monitoring and evaluation. The Fortification Rapid Assessment Tool (FRAT), as well as the more recent Fortification Assessment Coverage Tool (FACT), were designed to provide more comprehensive information on the consumption of fortified and fortifiable foods among many segments of the population. Additionally, indicators on the use of fortified foods, and sample collection to verify compliance, have been incorporated into national surveillance systems in a few countries (for example, Nicaragua), and modules from FRAT or FACT could be adapted and included in national monitoring systems.

Finally, each of the recommendations above needs to be underpinned by leadership and accountability in the public and private sectors. The challenges outlined in this report can be easily overcome with sustained leadership and commitment. Numerous governments in low- and middle-income countries have demonstrated impressive commitment to improved nutrition by establishing national fortification programs. It is of paramount importance that many of these countries revisit their fortification programs regularly assessing their design in the context of changing dietary patterns, and to ensure they are effective for achieving health impacts and are sustainable.

While food fortification cannot end malnutrition, it is a critical tool as part of national micronutrient deficiency prevention and control strategies. GAIN is excited about the future and the potential of fortification to help address micronutrient malnutrition. With greater donor and government investment to track population needs and enforce program standards, alongside increased private sector commitment, fortification efforts can be expanded and scaled up to substantially reduce vitamin and mineral deficiency disorders around the world and help whole societies achieve their full potential.

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About GAIN

The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) is an international organization launched at the UN in 2002 to tackle the human suffering caused by malnutrition. Today nearly 3.5 billion people worldwide are malnourished in some way. Close to 2 billion people survive on diets that lack necessary vitamins and nutrients, while about 1.4 billion people struggle with overweight and obesity. We know that sustainable, nutritious diets are crucial to ending the cycle of malnutrition and poverty. By building alliances that deliver impact at scale, we believe malnutrition can be eliminated within our lifetimes. Today our programs are on track to reach over a billion people with improved nutrition by 2016.
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