



**Providing Supplementary  
Nutritious Foods at Work  
during COVID-19:**

**The benefits to workers and  
considerations for employers**



# Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition

## WHO ARE WE

The **Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)** is a Swiss-based foundation launched at the UN in 2002 to tackle the human suffering caused by malnutrition.

Working with both governments and businesses, we aim to transform food systems so that they deliver more nutritious food for all people, especially the most vulnerable.

## VISION AND MISSION

GAIN is driven by a vision of a **world without malnutrition**, in which all people have access to and consume nutritious and safe food.

The GAIN mission is to advance nutrition outcomes by improving the consumption of **nutritious and safe food for all people**, especially the most vulnerable to malnutrition.

For more information visit: <https://www.gainhealth.org/>

# Workforce Nutrition

- GAIN's **Workforce Nutrition** programme aims to improve the nutrition of (vulnerable) workers and farmers in low- and middle-income countries.
- Through the **Workforce Nutrition Alliance (WNA)**, GAIN and the Consumer Goods Forum (CGF) advocate for an increased focus on Workforce Nutrition, support and encourage employers to commit to - and implement - workforce nutrition programmes, and monitor progress on these objectives. Visit <https://nutritionconnect.org/workforce-nutrition-alliance> to learn more.
- This slide deck offers recommendations on the **provision of nutritious foods during the global COVID-19 pandemic** and is part of a broader effort to develop an implementation support programme, supporting employers to implement Workforce Nutrition programmes.

## Purpose of the Guidance

**Target group:** Employers wanting to support their vulnerable workers and farmers in their supply chain – whose incomes and livelihoods have been affected by the COVID-19 crisis – with supplementary nutritious food.

**Purpose:** Offering employers a quick overview of where to start and what to consider in terms of supplementary nutritious foods for employees during the COVID-19 crisis.

# Providing Nutritious Foods is Important During COVID-19...

... to **increase the nutrient intake** of workers, who are not able to provide themselves with enough nutrients throughout the (work)day due to food system disruption and income reduction.



... to **strengthen the immune system** against serious illness caused by a virus such as COVID-19.



... to **improve health and wellbeing** of workers which has the potential to **reduce absenteeism** of workers, to increase **employee retention** and to increase **productivity and efficiency**.



... to **support healthy food choices** outside of the workplace.



# Supplementary Nutritious Safe Foods Recommendations



## Fruit & Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables contain vitamins and minerals that employees need to stay healthy.

**Yellow/orange fruits** (fresh and dried, such as papaya and citrus fruits) and **dark-green/orange vegetables** (such as orange fleshed sweet potato and spinach) are rich in vitamin A and C and antioxidants, which are essential for supporting the immune system.



## Starchy Staples

Starchy staples provide energy to employees throughout the day. Choose fortified or whole grain products when possible.

**Fortified whole grain bread and biscuits** or **fortified porridge** are examples of nutritious food choices.



## Protein Foods

Protein based foods reduce feelings of hunger.

**Nuts, beans** and **eggs** are examples of protein-rich foods.

Source: [GAIN, EWG & SUN Business Network 2020](#); [FAO 2020](#)

# Strategies to Improve Employees' Diets

- **Take home food items:** this includes raw/uncooked nutritious foods that workers can take home to cook a nutritious family meal.
- **Components of existing meal/snack:** this includes an addition to/improvement upon the nutritional quality of a meal or snack component that has already been offered frequently to the workers of a company.
- **Provide cooked complete meal:** this prepared meal includes a variety of nutritious foods and complies with the daily nutrient requirements of workers.
- **Others:** this could include food vouchers or coupons that workers could use to 'buy' food for them and their families.



# Guidelines on the Selection of Nutritious Foods during COVID-19

- Buy nutritious foods at local markets and provide elements of the diet which are hard to access or afford given the current COVID-19 market challenges.
- Avoid processed foods unless these contain significant amounts of relevant macronutrients (such as proteins) or micronutrients (such as calcium, folate, iron, and vitamin A/D).
- Food safety is important, and food needs to comply with international standards. (See slide 'Food Safety in Emergency Settings')
- Limit foods with added salt, free sugar and saturated fats.

**Food fortification** is the addition of essential vitamins and minerals to frequently eaten foods – such as **wheat flour**, **rice**, **salt**, **milk**, and **edible oils** – to improve the dietary intake of key micronutrients without changing the taste, look, and smell of the food.



GAIN's *Keeping Food Market Working 'Nutrition Guideline – selection/prioritization of food products'* is available upon request. Contact [workforcenutrition@gainhealth.org](mailto:workforcenutrition@gainhealth.org) for more information.



# How to Consider Women's Nutritional Needs

- **Provide women with an adequate amount energy from food.** During the pandemic, women's jobs are more susceptible to income reduction than men's jobs. This negatively affects the nutritional status of women and their children.
- **Consider the increased nutritional needs for both genders during the pandemic.** Women may require the same calories than men, since they carry the burden of unpaid caretaking and household responsibilities next to their jobs. Studies show that the amount of time spend on these responsibilities have increased due to Covid-19 measures.
- **Make sure to target women explicitly with emergency programmes, food and seed packages/vouchers and information.** Women are usually not seen as the head of the household. Therefore, they are less likely to benefit from access to finance and assets in emergency situations.

**In emergency settings, workers have increased nutritional needs on top of their gender and physical activity related nutritional needs.**

# Women Specific Nutritional Needs

- **Women workers of reproductive age** are more susceptible to anaemia and osteoporosis than men, so the intake of iron- and calcium rich foods is desirable during working hours.
- **Pregnant women** require folic acid, extra calorie intake, safe food and adequate water intake during working hours.
- **Women experiencing menopause** require extra water intake to prevent dehydration and hot flashes.







**Company:** Olam Agro India Ltd.  
In Andhra Pradesh, India

**Intervention:** Workers in three cashew factories in India receive nutritious take home food items during the COVID-19 pandemic. A variety of nuts and seeds are offered to the 2000 workers of the company, of whom 85% are female workers.

**Desired outcomes:**

- The take home food baskets are created to provide women with half of their daily iron requirements.
- This has the potential to reduce anaemia among women workers.



# Food Safety in Emergency Settings

**There is no existing evidence on the transmission of respiratory viruses, like COVID-19, through food and food packages.**

## **The same food safety rules apply as usual:**

- All staff must sanitize their hands and follow general hygiene practices when handling and consuming food.
- Separate raw and cooked foods.
- Wash fruits and vegetables with clean water.
- Cook animal products carefully to at least 70°C.
- Keep food at temperatures below 5°C (in the refrigerator) and above 60°C.

## **Additional food safety measure during Covid-19:**

- Provide workers with boxed food and bottled drinks where possible.



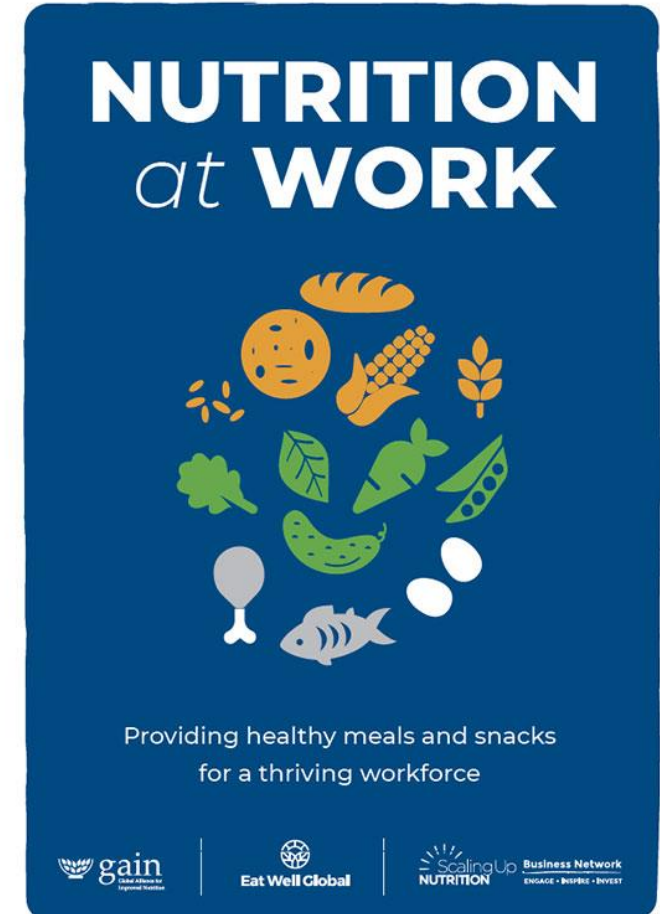
# WHO & ILO Recommendations on Distribution of Safe Food

Depending on the number of employees you have you may want to consider some of these recommendations for safe distribution of food:

- Ensure a physical spacing of at least 2 metres at work sites and common spaces, such as canteens, pantries and kitchens.
- Place tables and chairs apart, according to the safety distance.
- Avoid queues and mark walking routes (to food pick-up points and disposal points) and the safety distance with floor tape. Serving food may be necessary to avoid crowding in cafeterias.
- Implement time slots for meal breaks for each department.
- Where possible, use a canteen with two doors for a one-way flow of pedestrian traffic and ensure adequate air circulation.
- Assign vulnerable groups to remote rooms.
- Clean the chairs and tables in the canteen(s) with disinfectant spray (*0.05% bleach solution, or at least 70% ethanol*) after use.

## Next steps

- Download the **Nutrition at Work** handbook, including additional information (posters, annexes and additional information) at [NutritionConnect.org/Nutrition-at-Work](https://NutritionConnect.org/Nutrition-at-Work).
- Read the [Healthy Meal and Snack Recommendations](#) available at [NutritionConnect.org](https://NutritionConnect.org).
- Read [COVID-19 and Nutrition at Work](#) available at [NutritionConnect.org](https://NutritionConnect.org).



# References

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- [COVID-19 and Nutrition at Work – Tips to Keep Your Workforce Healthy and Safe](#)