

HARMONISATION WORKSHOP FOR FLOUR FORTIFICATION
CONSENSUS STATEMENT

Yes We Will!

We, the representatives of 16 African countries¹ at different stages of developing flour fortification programs, met in Nairobi, Kenya, 19-22 April 2010 to consider the evidence-based science behind various flour fortification guidelines, including the 2009 WHO consensus statement designed to assist countries in developing standards. Substantial vitamin and mineral deficiencies exist in sub-Saharan Africa, and food fortification, as a sustainable long-term approach with other nutrition interventions, has the potential to address this significant problem.

The Nairobi workshop built on progress made during the 2008 FFI workshop in Arusha, Tanzania. Both workshops were attended by participants from government standard setting and enforcement organizations; other government leaders; flour millers; bakers; regional economic communities and institutions; civil society; academia; vitamin and mineral pre-mix suppliers; as well as international development partners.

Building on guidelines previously developed within the region, we identified the need to review the ECSA guidelines in light of the WHO recommendations and harmonise these with contextual realities on flour consumption within our respective countries and the region. In this regard, ECSA, WHO, and other partners can assist countries in an advisory role, and partners expressed their commitment to provide technical support and to facilitate the exchange and sharing of experiences among those countries.

In the Harmonisation Workshop, we recognized that fortification guidelines are evolutionary and subject to change with the emergence of new scientific evidence and information on country needs. Nevertheless current guidelines are sufficient to initiate formal fortification programs in any country in the region.

We noted gaps in food consumption and nutrient intake data as well as scientific evidence on appropriate levels for fortifying maize with iron and zinc and fortifying other staples. Continued research dissemination was recommended to address these inadequacies, and we were encouraged to play an important role in contributing to the evolution of global guidelines. These gaps should not prevent countries from proceeding with fortification programs.

We were encouraged to develop systems to monitor programs to ensure quality and effectiveness, to develop social mobilisation tools to create awareness and acceptance of fortified products, and to advocate for governments to provide durable and enabling environments for fortification programs.

In conclusion, we have developed action plans and will commit ourselves to advance flour fortification within our respective countries in the next 100 days. These plans vary by country since countries are at different stages of implementation, and each country will require different types of support.

It is time to make informed decisions and act!!! Yes, together we will!!!

¹ Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Somalia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe