



JFPR: REG 9052 Project:
Sustainable Food Fortification in Central Asia and Mongolia
(Financed from the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction)

MIDTERM PROJECT REVIEW WORKSHOP REPORT



11-14 September 2006
Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyz Republic

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	–	Asian Development Bank
CIP	–	country investment plan
CPO	–	country project office
IDA	–	Iron deficiency Anemia
IDD	–	iodine deficiency disorders
EU	–	European Union
FAD	–	folic acid deficiency
GAIN	–	Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition
GBAO	–	Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (Tajikistan)
JFPR	–	Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction
KAN	–	Kazakh Academy of Nutrition
KASP	–	Kyrgyz Association of Salt Producers
LGPBK	–	League of Grain Producers and Bakers in Kazakhstan
MOH	–	Ministry of Health
MICS	–	Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey
MTR	–	midterm review
NFA	–	National Fortification Alliance
NGO	–	nongovernmental organization
NSMA	–	National Salt Manufacturers Association (Uzbekistan)
RCAO	–	Regional Coordinating and Administration Office
RRS	–	Regions under Republican Subordination (Tajikistan)
SES	–	Sanitary-Epidemiological Service
UNICEF	–	United Nations Children's Fund
USI	–	Universal Salt Iodization
VM	–	vitamin and mineral deficiency
deficiency		
WTO	–	World Trade Organization

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I. BACKGROUND

1. The Governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have entered into agreements with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on their leadership role in executing national projects to eliminate iodine deficiency disorders (IDD) and substantially reduce iron deficiency anemia (IDA) and folic acid deficiency (FAD). The lack of these key vitamins and minerals, also known as micronutrients, is more serious and common in Central Asia than in many other areas of the world. Iodine deficiency is the leading cause of preventable mental impairment in the world, and it significantly reduces mental capacity and labor potential of the entire workforce. In pregnancy, it causes babies to be born dead, physically disabled, or with brain damage. Iron deficiency reduces activity levels and productivity in whole populations. In 6-24 month-old children, it disrupts normal brain development. Effects on growing children include stunting, sickness, poor school attendance, and lower levels of concentration and memory. Severe anemia also causes higher mortality of women in childbirth. Folic acid deficiency before and during early pregnancy is a major cause of serious birth defects. In adults, it is associated with a higher rate of deaths from heart disease and stroke. Due to the negative consequences on the educability and productivity of large population segments, vitamin and mineral deficiency (VM Deficiency) is a significant liability to the effectiveness of investing in education and health care, thus compounding widespread poverty and reducing national economic development.

2. During 2001–2004, Central Asian countries in economic transition benefited from diversified financial, technical and management support through the ADB-managed Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (JFPR) 9005 Regional Project, and started building arrangements for tackling VM Deficiency through the fortification of salt and wheat flour intended for human consumption. National legislation for universal salt iodization (USI) was enacted in all but one country, and accompanied by strengthening of the public and private systems for quality assurance and quality control, self-reliant procurement and maintenance of iodization inputs and technology by the salt industry, and monitoring capacity in public and scientific institutions. The regulatory frameworks for flour fortification were initiated in each country, including normative requirements for domestic and cross-border trade in fortified flour products. Substantial progress took place in iodized salt production, trade and consumption, bringing the participant countries considerably closer to achieving the goal of global IDD elimination through the agreed-upon USI strategy. The considerable achievements under the JFPR9005 project convinced the Governments and their partners in private, scientific and civic organizations that the VM Deficiency alleviation goals through USI and substantial wheat flour fortification are feasible and within reach in Central Asia.

3. From July 2004 onward, the above-mentioned countries extended their collaboration with ADB under the JFPR9052 Regional Project with the aim to add to, reinforce and sustain the reduction of VM Deficiencies. The JFPR9052 project pays parallel attention to supply (production, poverty targeting and domestic/international trade), demand (public acceptance, and broad support among opinion makers/gatekeepers) and regulation (quality assurance and quality control, legislation and regulation, and trade facilitation) of fortified salt and wheat flour, with the following objectives:

- (i) Sustainable universal salt iodization in each country,
- (ii) Fortification of at least one-third of the wheat flour consumed domestically,
- (iii) Increased public and private capacities to supply the population with quality fortified food products,
- (iv) Established regulatory frameworks and incentive schemes to facilitate fortification and stimulate cross-border trade in fortified foods among countries in Central Asia,
- (v) Increased awareness among consumers of the need for prevention of VM Deficiencies and the benefits of micronutrient-enriched foods.

4. Compared to 2001–2004, the JFPR9052 project not only extends its operations to the nation rather than in only a few pilot districts of participating countries, but it has also shifted the main focus toward building systems to ensure habitual, durable fortification practices, as compared to initiation of fortification efforts and testing of their feasibility. These changes justify the need to put special emphasis on those actions that assist the private food industries to become self-reliant in essential input procurements (including a harmonized flour fortification premix and the KIO_3 fortificant for salt iodization), as well as on efforts that assist the food industry to establish their habitual quality assurance operations and that support the food inspection in establishing regular, transparent practices in food quality control needed to enhance the public's confidence in the quality of fortified foods.

5. The renewal of JFPR funding support along with the reorientation of strategic direction in the JFPR9052 project is expected to produce the following performance indicators at completion:

- (i) Use of quality iodized salt in at least 90% of households in each country,
- (ii) Self-reliance of the salt industry in required procurements of KIO_3 ,
- (iii) Wheat flour fortification capacity established in domestic flour mills in accordance to country-specific targets,
- (iv) National flour premix procurement and/or production arrangements in each country,
- (v) Legislative and normative requirements for flour fortification established in each country,
- (vi) Regulations introduced that facilitate cross-border trade in fortified flour and iodized salt among Central Asian countries.

6. The JFPR9052 project has four major components:

- (i) Strengthening the capacity of salt productive and wheat flour milling industries,
- (ii) Strengthening the capacity of Government departments and operations,
- (iii) Social mobilization of civic society and poverty targeting,
- (iv) Project management, monitoring and evaluation.

7. The present report provides details of a midterm review of the JFPR9052 project conducted in the months September–November 2006, which culminated in carefully revised Country Investment Plans (CIPs) for the remaining 16–18 months period. In the following chapters, the report addresses some of the key strategic issues that surfaced during execution of the present project, presents the preparations, holding and outcomes of a MTR Workshop in Cholpon Ata, Kyrgyz Republic on 11–14 September 2006, and it outlines the support needs in countries and from the regional perspective to further assist towards successful completion of the JFPR9052 project for sustainable food fortification in Central Asia and Mongolia.

II. SOME KEY ISSUES AND PROGRESS DURING JFPR9052

8. In view of the complexity of the project and the large number of tasks that demand steady management attention, it is not surprising that various issues continue to surface throughout the project's execution, the previous period not being an exception. This chapter attempts to capture the key important issues relevant to overall progress and likely to influence project performance indicators at completion of the project.

A. Country Specific Issues

1. Kazakhstan

9. A serious continued issue in Kazakhstan during the past project period was the challenge posed by a new proposed Law "On Food Safety" that requires being adopted due to the national desire to join the World Trade Organization (WTO). Ministry of Agriculture officials, the designated authority in-charge of this new Law, together with their colleagues in the Ministry of Industry & Trade, persisted in the ill-advised (by EU-sponsored technicians) resistance against the insertion of a clause in the new Law proposal on mandatory flour fortification.

10. Increasingly during the first JFPR9052 period, the formulation, agreement and establishment of technical details and specifications in the regulatory and normative sphere were becoming a serious factor in the overall progress toward the flour fortification goal achievement. The revised CIP remains optimistic, however, that the complex normative base will be finalized during the remaining project period.

11. The preliminary results of the 2005 MICS (details are in the next chapter) demonstrated that the progress in salt iodization in Kazakhstan had reached the point that greater than 90% of households are using quality iodized salt. As a consequence, the overall policy concern is shifting toward the need to develop national monitoring capacity for surveillance of iodine consumption in the population, differentiated by industry supply sources, to permit early warning and follow-up.

12. The collaboration in the project by the League of Grain Producers and Bakers in Kazakhstan (LGPKB) was critical in the extension of fortification to larger numbers of flour mills. LGPKB has been resourceful in exploring solutions, including a 2-phased fortification process, for the specific issues that surfaced in the practice of fortification in smaller-sized mills.

13. The project's advocacy on Government-subsidized food procurements revealed the important influence by local authorities in facilitating the provision of the population with fortified foods, especially in poor rural areas.

2. Kyrgyz Republic

14. Following a peaceful change of Presidency, Kyrgyz Republic continued going through a period of high-level political instability, which affected the efficiency of formulating, consultation and introducing a new Law on mandatory flour fortification. The continued lack of stable governance also affects the project's ability to anchor the assurance of joint high-level oversight for sustained fortification in a functional multi-sector National Coalition. A revision of the composition of the Steering Committee continued being reviewed by Government.

15. Resistance against flour fortification in large-scale flour mills became more apparent, despite their provision with equipment and partially subsidized premix. These large, "old-style

Soviet” type mills are struggling with obtaining a sufficient amount of grain supply required for efficient start-up and operations, and increasingly they are being out-competed by smaller mills with newer equipment.

16. With the start-up of flour fortification in small and medium-size mills, problems were experienced with the project-provided Techno Might feeders. The close collaboration by the Association of Fortified Flour Producers has been very helpful in starting to explore solutions in the efficient operation of these feeders with the premix used in the project.

17. A significant limitation on inspecting fortified food quality and production was caused by an act in parliament that food inspectors are allowed only one visit a year to food production enterprises. Consequently, the effectiveness of control checks by SES of the fortified food supply will almost entirely shift to inspections in the retail market.

18. The results of the MICS in Kyrgyz Republic once more exposed the custom among some salt processors to minimize the amount of KIO_3 fortificant used in the salt iodization process. The MICS results also demonstrated that the non-iodized salt leakage from across the border has now abated.

3. Mongolia

19. Although Mongolia completed the national policy, national program and legislation, along with the normative requirements, to achieve IDD elimination through the USI strategy, the national progress to achieve the goal remained painfully slow. The large share of salt consumed by the population of Mongolia is imported, but the efforts in JFPR9052 were directed toward increasing the supply of affordable, locally produced iodized salt. The limited attention to quality assuring imported iodized salt was a major factor in holding up quick national success.

20. The national progress in flour fortification is also hesitant. A large number of interrelated issues continues surfacing, illustrated by the following examples: Too few mills, mostly serving urban areas only, have started actively participating; Two-thirds of the national grain need is imported and their supply is highly variable; Difficulties remain in the logistics of supply and access to premix; The respective roles by the Mongolian Grain Processing Association and the Ministry of Agriculture need better coordination; The Public Health Institute deserves strengthening their assistance in fortified food inspections; NGO involvement has not yet reached its potential in influencing acceptance by consumers; The resistance against fortification in medical circles remains to be effectively addressed; Too limited high-level interest in effective national oversight, etcetera. The high-level Government process to drive legislation and regulation remains mainly dedicated to policy setting and program formulation, with limited follow-through by lawmakers to elaborate and establish the required norms for the industry’s performance in food fortification and the inspection’s verification of quality characteristics of products and procedures at production, import and in markets.

4. Tajikistan

21. A draft law on mandatory flour fortification, formulated with participation of the Association of Fortified Food Producers, started circulating during the first JFPR9052 period. The text requires fortification of all grades of flour, irrespective of the differential capacity between large and small mills. Only a small fraction of the imported flour, and entirely directed at relief operations, was fortified during the period.

22. On a positive note, the long-standing non-iodized salt supply into retail markets from “open” salt deposits in Kathlon Oblast was begun to be addressed by the establishment of

salt farmer cooperatives with guaranteed uptake and quality-assured iodization by the Khuja Mumin factory.

23. During the past period, a portable kit for testing whether flour is fortified was developed and distributed among the project implementers to add to the more cumbersome and expensive laboratory-based measurement of iron content. This kit may assist in stimulating better and more frequent quality control checks by inspectors on the import and retail sales of flour in shops, and by flour millers in the fortification process.

5. Uzbekistan

24. The draft law on IDD elimination, developed during the past JFPR period, passed a first round of reviews in Parliament. The revised composition of the Steering Committee continued being under review by the Government. The MICS results show that in spring 2006, slightly above half of all the households in Uzbekistan are using quality iodized salt, similar as 2–3 years ago.

25. The project continued its partnership collaboration with the GAIN-UNICEF supported project for flour fortification which launched a major communications drive during the first project period, thus contributing to the general public perception about the needs for and benefits of fortified foods.

B. Regional Collaboration

26. Building the capacity for project performance assessment was a high priority for activities by the RCAO, in anticipation of a solid evaluation at the end of JFPR9052. The RCAO was closely involved in annual evaluation workshops in Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia and Tajikistan, making sure that subject areas and decisions were closely aligned to project objectives and agreed-upon administrative and funding commitments. RCAO worked with the Kazakh team in adapting the ADB performance audit framework to the country project and trial testing of the framework to achievements obtained by the project in Kazakhstan. RCAO worked closely with CPO's and their counterparts in all countries, in particular the Ministries of Health and the salt producer and flour milling associations, in assessing outcomes and results, which culminated in a detailed quarterly progress report for the period up to June 2006.

27. RCAO continued working closely with KAN, for example in the revamp and updating of the regional web site. RCAO and the Kazakh CPO are periodically consulting with the LGPBK on the development of a regional association of millers in Central Asia. Also, the project continued its frequent and inclusive collaboration with UNICEF and KAN in the implementation of this project. UNICEF and KAN staff members were active participants and made valuable contributions in the RCAO-managed regional workshops and conferences, and ongoing work under the project in countries is often carried out with joint input by JFPR staff and UNICEF colleagues as well as scientists from KAN.

28. Conversely, JFPR provides regularly inputs in UNICEF-organized advocacy events, and in communications activities and technical assistance that UNICEF extends. In Kyrgyz Republic, the JFPR contribution in the (poorest) community-based monitoring and promotion of iodized salt consumption and organized through the Kyrgyz-Swiss Health reform Project deserves being noted. The RCAO and JFPR PO are in regular communication with the leadership in UNICEF, including the Regional Office in Geneva. RCAO and the PO are supporting the preparations for a major international conference to be held in Turkey on flour fortification that will bring together national leaders and the major flour milling industries of Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, together with the agencies and support groups.

Table 1: National Legislation, Regulations, and Standards on Fortified Food Products

Descriptive Item	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyz Republic	Mongolia	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
I. QUALITY SALT IODIZATION					
(i) Principal Legislation & Regulations					
<i>Laws/Regulations</i>	L (2003)	L-40 (2000)	L (2003)	L-85 (2002)	
<i>National Programs</i>	GD-1283 (2001)	GD-836 (2002); 2003)	GD (2002)	GD-436 (2002)	GD-07-1-198 (2005)
<i>Other</i>	CIS (2001)	CIS (2001)		CIS (2001)	CIS (2001)
(ii) Production Establishment & Sales Promotion					
<i>Laws/Regulations</i>	GD-828 (2005)	GD-478 (2002)			
<i>Standards/Premix</i>	S (1975); S (1977)	S (1975); S (1977)		S (1975); S (1977)	S (1975); S (1977)
<i>Standards/Salt</i>	TR (1996); S (2003)	S (2001)	S (2001)	S (2004a,b)	S (2005)
<i>Other</i>	AD-641 (2004)	AD-478 (2002); AD-42/1 (2006)		AD-9-2 (2005)	
(iii) Tax & Customs Duties and Privileges					
<i>Laws/Regulations</i>	GD-1389 (1996,2004)	GD (2004); GD (2006)			
<i>Customs Tax</i>		TC (2004); GD-391 (2004)			
<i>Tax Tariffs</i>		CC (2003,2006)			
<i>Other</i>					
(iv) Monitoring on Import & Export and Wholesale					
<i>Laws/Regulations</i>		PD-184 (2002); GD-836 (2002)			
<i>Standards/SanPiN</i>	S (1985, 2003)	S (1985, 2001); SanPiN (2004)	S (1985, 2002)		S (1985); SanPiN (2002)
<i>Other</i>	AD-641 (2004)		AD-84/143/87 (2005)		

AD - ministry/agency decree, **CC**- Customs Code, CIS - agreement of CIS, GD - government's decree, L - national law, PD - Presidential Decree, S - national standard, TC - Tax Code, TR - technical requirements (conditions)

Table 1: National Legislation, Regulations, and Standards on Fortified Food Products

Descriptive Item	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyz Republic	Mongolia	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
II. QUALITY WHEAT FLOUR FORTIFICATION					
(i) Principal Legislation & Regulations					
<i>Laws/Regulations</i>	L-543 (2004)			GD (2002)	
<i>National Programs</i>			GD (2003)		
<i>Other</i>					
(ii) Production Establishment & Sales Promotion					
<i>Laws/Regulations</i>	GD-708 (2005); GD-828 (2005)	GD-289 (2002)			PD-153 (2005)
<i>Standards/Premix</i>	TR (2002); S (2006)	TR (2004)	S (2002, 2003)	TR (2003)	S (2006)
<i>Standards/Flour</i>	TR (2002); S (2005,2006)	TR (2002); S (2004, 2005)	S (2002, 2003)	S (2004)	S (2002a,b; 2006)
<i>Standards/Bakery</i>	TR (2002); S (2006)	S (2004)	S (2004a,b)	S (2004)	
<i>Other</i>	GD (2005)	AD-42/1 (2006)			
(iii) Tax & Customs Duties and Privileges					
<i>Laws/Regulations</i>	GD-1389 (1996,2004)				
<i>Customs Tax</i>		TC (2004, 2006)	L (2006)		
<i>Tax Tariffs</i>		CC (2003,2006)			
<i>Other</i>					
(iv) Monitoring on Import & Export and Wholesale					
<i>Laws/Regulations</i>				GD (2002)	
<i>Standards/SanPiN</i>			S (2002a,b; 2003a,b)		S (2006)
<i>Other</i>	AD-07/21/15269 (2005)		AD-84/143/87 (2005)		

AD - ministry/agency decree, **CC**- Customs Code, CIS - agreement of CIS, GD - government's decree, L - national law, PD - Presidential Decree, S - national standard, TC - Tax Code, TR - technical requirements (conditions)

C. Key Achievements During the First Phase of JFPR9052

1. Legislation and Regulation

29. To realize a positive policy environment for food fortification, and to guide the technical execution in the food industry and promote transparency during market sales (including cross-border trade) the project pays close attention to the establishment of a full-fledged operational framework of legislation and regulatory requirements. The situation attained at the end of the first period of JFPR9052 in the participating countries is shown in Table 1 (previous pages) by the commodities salt and flour.

30. On salt iodization, Government Decrees have initiated national programs with the stated goals to eliminate IDD in all participant countries. In all countries except Uzbekistan, principle legislation has been enacted to mandate the iodization of all salt intended for human and animal consumption. To guide best product quality assurance practices in the salt industries and direct transparent quality control practices by the food inspection authorities in compliance with national laws, the principal legislation in each country is being followed-through by establishing norms and standards that must be respected in fortified food production, in domestic and cross-border trade of fortified foods, and at points of sale of fortified food products in the consumer markets. The descriptions in Table 1 for salt iodization show that Kazakhstan and Kyrgyz Republic have progressed farthest in these regulatory requirements.

31. With regard to wheat flour fortification, Kazakhstan is the single country in Central Asia that has enacted a law in Parliament on mandatory fortification of premium and first grade wheat flour. For fortified flour production and sales, however, guidance is provided in all countries through agreed-upon specifications and technical norms for the composition of fortified wheat flour, thus enabling the flour millers to fortify their products appropriately upon customer request.

2. Sustainable Procurement and Access to Fortification Inputs

32. With technical scientific input of the Kazakh Academy of Nutrition, the Biomedpreparat-Engineering Center in Stepnogorsk has started with the production of the agreed-upon KAP premix (and a diluted premix) to increase its accessibility by flour millers. Access to potassium iodinate, the single agreed-upon salt iodization fortificant, is being facilitated upon need in each country by joint advance purchases from international supply sources through the salt industry associations.

3. Increases in Fortified Flour and Iodized Salt Supplies

33. Building on data provided through the salt industry and flour millers associations, and augmented by verifications through the country project offices, the consolidated data on iodized salt production and fortified flour production by country are shown in Tables 2 and 3. The “planned production” amount in each country has been discussed between the CPO’s and the food industries in each country, and is based on the country-specific supply targets, matched with the production capacities in each of the food industries. It would appear from the consolidated data reports that the production of both fortified flour and iodized salt in Kyrgyz Republic is significantly behind schedule. Despite the higher target compared to the other countries, the progress in Kazakhstan in fortified flour production is exemplary.

Table 2: Consolidated Data on the Production of Fortified Wheat Flour in 2004–2006

Country	2004	2005	January–September 2006		
			Planned annual production (MT)*	Consolidated production (MT)	Consolidated production (%)
Kazakhstan	120,877	86,570	274,000	170,591	62.3
Kyrgyz Republic	30,609	13,513	69,000	12,070	17.5
Mongolia	11,904	33,118	79,200	29,328	37.0
Tajikistan	58,063	72,773	145,000	70,484	48.6
Uzbekistan	336,260	36,859	250,000	0	0.0
Total	557,713	242,833	817,200	282,473	34.6

Table 3: Consolidated Data on the Production of Iodized Salt in 2004-2006

Country	2004	2005	January–September 2006		
			Planned annual production (MT)*	Consolidated production (MT)	Consolidated production (%)
Kazakhstan	65,658	67,391	70,000	43,685	62.4
Kyrgyz Republic	13,705	12,051	15,200	6,740	44.3
Mongolia	5,430	5,694	5,940	5,592	94.1
Tajikistan	22,588	30,475	39,850	31,195	78.3
Uzbekistan	43,004	66,595	69,300	51,425	74.2
Total	150,385	182,206	200,290	138,637	69.2

4. Regional Support

34. The multi-pronged approach and complexity of the JFPR9052 project, as well as the common heritage and similarities in arrangements within and between the public and private sectors in participant countries are justifications for a strong regional support mechanism in execution of the project.

35. RCAO in Almaty, Kazakhstan provides administrative, financial and technical-managerial linkages, exchanges and support, facilitates centralized input procurements, organizes meetings with benefits across participant countries, and provides multi-functional oversight to the five Country Project Offices (CPO's), including assistance where possible in annual evaluation workshops. The RCAO also aids in technical assistance provision by scientists of the Kazakh Academy of Nutrition (KAN) and international consultants. RCAO facilitates public relations for the project and plays a critical role in quality assurance for tracking expenditures, achievements and results obtained in participant countries. Working with KAN, RCAO maintains an attractive, designated web site for sharing information and documentation for future work on alleviation of VM Deficiencies in the participant countries.

36. During the first period of JFPR9052, three regional meetings were organized by RCAO on the following cross-country subjects:

- (i) Communication strategy development and management (Bishkek, 22–24 August 2005), targeted at CPO staff and personnel. The workshop contributed to better understanding and increased capacity for designing appropriately targeted communications strategies and helped participants with understanding and tools for better management of the communications activities in support of reaching the JFPR fortification objectives.
- (ii) Self-sustained quality salt iodization (Tashkent, 22–24 November 2005), including 64 salt industry representatives, collaborating agencies and inputs suppliers. The Conference strengthened the operations of Salt Producer Associations, including their improved role in representing the salt industry interests and contributing in achievement of the JFPR objectives as collaborative member in National Fortification Alliances
- (iii) Improving quality wheat flour fortification (Almaty, 7–9 February 2006), including 127 milling industry representatives, collaborating agencies, international milling entities and the input supplier networks. The Conference contributed in further capacity development of Wheat Miller's Associations, their contribution in the JFPR objectives and collaboration as member in National Fortification Alliances, as well as strengthening the international linkages with the milling industry worldwide.

37. As to flour fortification, the project continued supporting the establishment of regulatory norms and requirements needed to follow through on proposed or agreed-upon mandatory laws for fortification of all premium and 1st grade flour. Each country has been able to obtain agreement on the appropriate regulations for importation of equipment and premix, as well as for fortified flour production and sales. Work started to reduce tariffs and taxes on input requirements for flour fortification in all countries, and in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyz Republic, the import tax on premix and feeders was reduced or eliminated. JFPR had assisted during the previous period in input procurement, including premix, and during the JFPR9052 project countries started moving in earnest toward developing self-reliance in production and/or import procurements of the vitamin-mineral premix. KAN continued its support in promoting and quality assurance of premix production and usage, and it started developing diversified specialty premix formulations.

38. The consolidated data in the April–June 2006 Quarterly Report by RCAO shows the dynamic progress in fortified flour supplies across countries and with time for all JFPR countries. Despite the fact that flour milling is highly variable in response to the weather and international production and trade conditions, clear improvements are apparent in the fortified flour supply in 2006 compared to 2005. The consolidated production data from country progress reports indicate that by mid 2006, the fortified flour supply in the aggregate for JFPR9052 countries had reached more than 40% of the planned annual target.

5. Progress and CIP Preparations in Countries

39. Starting out with a longer history and a background of past UNICEF involvements, the baseline situation in salt iodization across the JFPR countries was significantly more favorable for reaching success of the USI goal than was the start situation in flour fortification. Consolidated UNICEF data indicate that by the start of JFPR9052 in 2004, on average 62% of households in JFPR countries used adequately iodized salt. In the course of the first JFPR9052 period, large-scale MICS surveys conducted with UNICEF support showed that this indicator increased to 66% across all countries, due to substantial improvements obtained in Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan, while Kazakhstan as first country

obtained evidence in early 2006 that it surpassed the 90% benchmark, indicating universal salt iodization. Specific data for JFPR countries are mentioned in a later chapter.

40. To support attainment of the USI goal in each country, the CIPs are generally focused on efforts to improve and ascertain self-reliance in salt productive industries and their Associations for input procurement, adequate quality assurance procedures at production, and appropriate roles by Associations in the National Fortification Alliances to reach sustained performance. The CIPs are also extending assistance to food inspection authorities for transparent conduct of quality checks, and collaborate with NGOs in community-based activities to strengthen the consumers' insistence on exclusive iodized salt supplies. The April-June 2006 Quarterly Report of RCAO documents the steady production of iodized salt for 2005 and 2006, estimating that by mid 2006, 43% of the annual production target had been met.

41. Building upon the accomplishments of the JFPR9005 period, the JFPR9052 project continued its support of operational decision-making through the multi-sector steering committees. Meetings of these project steering committees are held with regular intervals in Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Tajikistan. Forming and nurturing a National Fortification Alliance (NFA) is a particular example of the extended leadership role that MOH, as executive agency under JFPR, can play in each country on behalf of Government. These Alliances have been formed in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan but no meetings were reported during the first JFPR9052 project period. The concept of operating the NFA responds to a need for periodic renewal of high-level political commitments in all partnering organizations, resolution of issues that arise while sustaining the fortification efforts, and brokering-cum-follow-through of agreement among public, private and civic sectors to continue executing responsibilities in jointly making sure that food fortification remains permanent and successful. Thus, the NFA has a critical contribution in sustaining food fortification, once success is achieved.

6. Selected Best Practices and Innovations

42. The following paragraphs describe a number of noteworthy developments that took place in the countries participating in JFPR. The intent is to describe experiences (best practices) that have a partly innovative character and may serve as examples for similar efforts in other countries.

a. Kazakhstan: Parliament set to preserve mandatory flour fortification

43. In April 2004, after more than three years of preparations and advocacy by JFPR and partners, the Parliament of Kazakhstan on proposition by the Minister of Health approved the law "On Quality and Safety of Food Products", stipulating that all the wheat flour of premium and first grade produced in Kazakhstan should be fortified. This was followed in July 2005 by a Government Decree stating that mandatory fortification is meant for the purpose of eliminating micronutrient deficiencies in the population, and that the compulsory law would come in effect in a phased manner, starting with the largest four mills in July 2006. Since the law was enacted, the JFPR partners have made considerable progress with the formulation and enactment of methods, standards and normative requirements that will make the manufacturing of common foodstuffs from fortified wheat flour the habitual norm for the dietary supplies of Kazakh citizens.

44. During 2005, a revision of the law "On Quality and Safety of Food Products" became necessary due to the preparations in Kazakhstan to gain accession to the WTO. In accordance to WTO custom, the Ministry of Agriculture was tasked to introduce a new law "On Food Safety" for Parliament consideration. Initial consultations among lawmakers of

health and agriculture on the need to incorporate the obligation for flour fortification in the new law met with resistance on the ill-informed argument that the WTO would not respect the national mandatory food fortification law. Moreover, the issue became further compounded by the position of Ministry of Trade and Industry officials who argued that the national mandatory food fortification standards could be interpreted as an unfair barrier to free trade.

45. The JFPR partner organizations in Kazakhstan have worked diligently to deal with these issues and ensure that the compulsory fortification requirements became incorporated in the law proposal by the Ministry of Agriculture. The new law proposal, submitted to the Parliament in May 2006, states in the articles that

- (i) Fortification of food products is permitted to restore or increase the nutritive value for the purpose of deficiency prevention;
- (ii) Fortification shall be subject to control by the sanitary-epidemiological authorities and implemented in the order established by the Government of Kazakhstan; and
- (iii) Methods of enrichment shall be in correspondence with established normative documentation, sanitary-epidemiological rules and norms, and other normative documents of standardization.

46. It is hoped that the Parliament of Kazakhstan will consider accepting the new law during the fourth quarter of 2006.

b. Kyrgyz Republic: Kyrgyz Association of Salt Producers works toward universal salt iodization

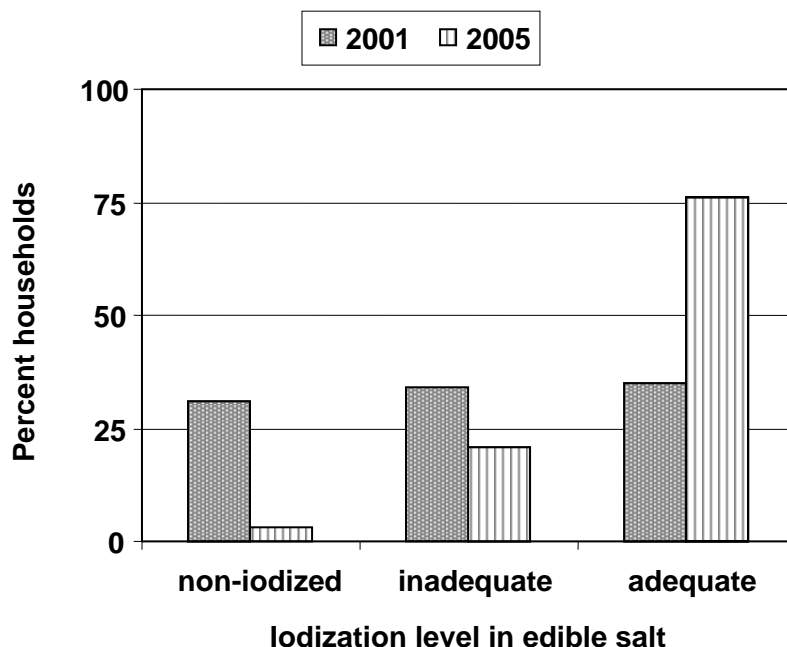
47. Salt iodization is mandatory in Kyrgyzstan as per the law “On Prevention of Iodine Deficiency Disorders in Kyrgyz Republic” enacted by Parliament in January 2000. In March 2003, the businesses engaged in salt production and trade in Kyrgyz Republic took the initiative to establish the Kyrgyz Association of Salt Producers (KASP). The main mandate of KASP is to represent the interests of the salt industry in relations with the Government and international agencies. KASP is a member of the National Fortification Alliance and it actively participates in actions under the national IDD elimination program launched in January 2002. In August 2004, KASP initiated and co-organized the 1st Conference for Salt Producers of Central Asia under the JFPR project umbrella.

48. The national market of edible salt in Kyrgyz Republic amounts to approx. 20,000 MT a year, 60% of which is manufactured domestically and the remainder imported mainly from Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. A total of 15 domestic enterprises are involved in salt production and trade, and almost all are members of KASP. The salt industry members have steadily become more compliant with the universal salt iodization policy of Kyrgyz Republic. The retail price for iodized salt in Kyrgyzstan varies from 3.5 to 18 som/kg, depending on salt purity, packaging, and producer reputation.

49. During the first two years after its establishment, KASP collaborated closely with the JFPR project and other agencies in actions aimed to ensure that all the edible salt in Kyrgyz Republic is iodized. Therefore, the first order of attention was to address the leakage of non-iodized salt into Kyrgyz markets from outside the country (Figure 1), which stood at almost 35% of all the salt marketed in the households of Kyrgyz Republic in 2001. KASP actively engaged in discussions with salt producers and authorities in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyz Republic to ensure monitoring of the salt harvested from inland deposits in Taraz Oblast, Kazakhstan and to promote border control checking along with market raids in Kyrgyzstan with the aim to expose the illegal trade in non-iodized salt. By end 2005, these activities led to a reduction of the share of non-iodized salt to less than 5% as shown in Figure 1. At the same time, however, the new data indicate that approx 20% of the households use salt that

is not adequately iodized. Thus, the challenge for the salt industry in Kyrgyz Republic has shifted from a focus on preventing the leakage of non-iodized salt into the domestic market toward ensuring that all the salt for their customers meets the agreed-upon national standards.

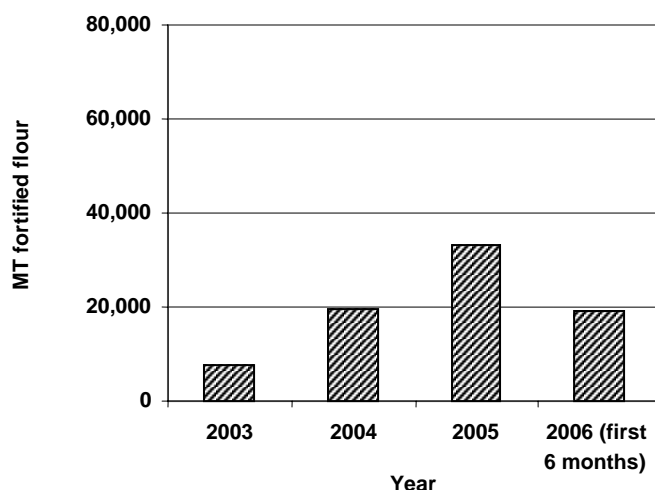
Figure 1: Progress Toward USI in Kyrgyz Republic



50. The JFPR project together with the Republican Center for Health Promotion and KASP, and in collaboration with other agencies has recently started with conducting campaigns to promote the insistence by Kyrgyz consumers on being supplied by only iodized salt in the markets and shops throughout the Republic. These campaigns are conducted Oblast-wise, the latest one in Issyk Kul Oblast during the first four months of 2006. In each Oblast, Family Group Practitioners organize salt testing by rapid test kits in households, while officials of SES and local authorities carry out the same tests in the markets and shops of the communities. These tests are used to identify salt brands that are either not iodized or inadequately iodized and KASP is following up on the test results by direct work with its members who are selling inadequate products in the Oblasts where the tests were carried out. From end 2006 onward, the names of salt companies found to be selling inadequately iodized salt will be publicized in the local and national media.

c. Mongolia: On track to meet the fortified flour goal?

51. In conformity with the overall goals of the JFPR project, Mongolia has committed to realize fortification of at least one-third of the wheat flour consumed domestically. The annual need for wheat flour in Mongolia is 200–250,000MT, thus the goal under the project was set at a level of 79,200MT. Only 30–35% of the grain required to meet the national consumption need is grown domestically, making the mills in Mongolia significantly dependent on the vagaries of habitual fluctuations in the international supplies of wheat grain. Due to long and unpredictable delays in the supply channels, Mongolia does not import flour. During the previous JFPR9005 project, 6 mills collaborated in the national policy, leading to a domestic production of 19,684MT fortified flour in 2004 (see Figure 2). While working with the same 6 mills, the fortified flour supply was raised during 2005 to 33,118MT, or more than 40% of the end-of-project target by 2007.

Figure 2: Fortified Flour Production in Mongolia

52. The JFPR partners in Mongolia are working diligently to put all the necessary conditions in place to achieve the national flour fortification goal. Early during the present JFPR9052 period, the number of collaborating mills was extended to 27, including 2 large (240–330MT/d) mills in Ulaanbatar, and the remainder consisting of medium (45–60MT/d) and small (5–30MT/d) mills, dispersed over the vast territory of the country. The required legislation has been introduced for enactment and the detailed normative requirements for quality assurance and control are being elaborated. The Mongolian Grain Processor's Association works closely with the JFPR project partners in the training of mill operators on equipment operations and maintenance, and in-process quality assurance. All the collaborating mills have been equipped with feeders and the required premix for 2006 has been purchased. The Association will take over the responsibility for premix purchase from 2007 onwards. Mills are paying one-third of the cost for the equipment back to the project, and a number of additional mills have purchased premix feeders on their own account. Millers cover the costs for packaging, labeling and advertising. All the wheat grain milled into premium flour is presently being fortified in Mongolia, and for the first six months of 2006—the winter period with habitually low grain supplies,—the total production of fortified flour amounted to 19,033MT. The Ministry of Agriculture of Mongolia, which is responsible for project oversight, has made the allocation of grain imports to the mills conditional on their production of fortified flour.

d. Tajikistan: Small Salt Producer Cooperatives in Kathlon Oblast bring the achievement of the USI goal in sight

53. On 7 March 2006, the President of Tajikistan, Mr E. Rakhmonov, conducted a special meeting with women leaders and JFPR collaborating organizations to highlight the significance of achieving USI to meet the national goal of IDD elimination. Although Tajikistan has adopted the law on universal salt iodization in 2002, the results of the nationwide MICS survey in the fall of 2005 had demonstrated that 40% of households in Kathlon Oblast and 57% of households in RRS still used non-iodized salt. During the meeting, the President tasked the Ministries of Health and of Finance to be vigilant on businesses and companies that import and sell non-iodized salt to the population. The 2005 survey results demonstrated that the salt deposits in Kathlon Oblast were a major source for the slow progress in achieving the national USI goal.

54. Encouraged by the leadership and direction of the President, and along with the renewed high-level attention in the line Ministries, the JFPR partner organizations, including UNICEF, have worked together during the previous JFPR9052 period in organizing the more

than 80 small salt producers in Kathlon Oblast into seven small producer cooperatives. These cooperatives have made standing arrangements with the Khuja Mumin salt factory to deliver their production at an agreed-upon fixed price, while the Khuja Mumin factory has committed its full capacity for the iodization of the salt from the cooperatives. The salt is packed in standard 2kg bags, with Healthy Food logo and marketed at a price that is not different from non-iodized salt.

55. In addition, the project has worked together with the SES authorities in GBAO, RRS and Kathlon Oblasts to strengthen the quality control and food inspection arrangements. Moreover, SES has started conducting salt testing at road checkpoints on the main trunk roadways leading from the Kathlon salt deposits to the major consumer markets in these Oblasts. Added to this source of iodized salt, two new salt factories were established during the first phase of JFPR9052—LLC Dushanbe and Dilovar. Both factories have procured equipment for iodization and packaging during the past year.

56. With these new developments, Tajikistan is well set to achieve the project goal for salt iodization at the end of the project period.

III. MIDTERM REVIEW WORKSHOP

A. Preparation

57. Organized by the RCAO in Almaty, the JFPR9052 Midterm Review Workshop was held from 11 to 14 September 2006 in Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyz Republic. The purpose of the MTR Workshop was to jointly examine the progress and analyze the obstacles toward achieving the JFPR9052 project, with the view to identify and discuss key strategic actions to be undertaken in each country and by RCAO and KAN during the remaining project period.

58. In preparation of the Workshop, the CPO of each country was requested to prepare a draft Country Investment Plan, outlining a summary of achievements and lessons learned during the previous JFPR9052 period, and outlining the proposed actions and their expected outcomes to achieve the country-specific JFPR objectives. In addition, each CPO prepared summaries of the national progress in salt iodization, wheat flour fortification and public policy development, as well as the utilization of consultant services and conduct of conferences, seminars and trainings, against a background summary of the baseline VM Deficiency situation in the country. These papers, arranged by country, are appended to this report in Annex.

B. Workshop Proceedings

59. The Regional Workshop on JFPR9052 Midterm Review brought together 24 officials and staff from public institutions and private food industries of each participating country, joined by staff members and experts from the RCAO, international agencies and a collaborating partner (ADB, UNICEF and GAIN) and scientific advisors (KAN, Emory University), 40 persons in total. The Workshop Agenda and the List of Participants are attached as Annexes I and II.

60. The conduct of the Workshop was designed to be fully participatory. The core element in the agenda were the country presentations, each consisting of a focused expose of the progress made in project implementation, followed by analysis of the constraints encountered and the barriers foreseen for the remaining project period, and ending with a short outline of the major elements and/or revisions of the CIP agreed-upon at the start of the project. Each country presentation was followed by a discussion to address specific questions and to provide clarification of details upon request from the audience.

61. The country presentations were intermingled with several plenary presentations and round table discussions around the issues of major interest, such as product quality assurance/control, monitoring of progress, and communication strategies to support the overall project objectives. Also, the facilitators and resource persons allocated by country team worked in the interim and during the evening hours with the country teams on the elaboration of CIP revisions. During the final day, bilateral discussion sessions were held to present, discuss and review the CIP revised proposals, and to assemble the consolidated opinions and recommendations of the resource persons.

C. Summary of Remaining Challenges and Issues

1. Kazakhstan

62. Overall, the key priority challenges for the remaining project period in Kazakhstan are:

- (i) Permanent arrangement and operations by private salt industries during production and transparent market inspection by SES to sustain the considerable achievements in quality salt iodization,¹
- (ii) Preservation at high political level and follow-through in the industry and markets and among civic society of the national legislation on mandatory fortification of all premium and first grade wheat flour in Kazakhstan,
- (iii) Consolidation of operations through the established technical and political partnership arrangements in salt and flour fortification, along with extended and clearly focused activities in social mobilization via the media and through NGOs, in preparation for successful continuation of food fortification efforts once the project expires.

63. With respect to achieving the USI objective, the proposed Kazakhstan CIP for the remaining period will be focused on actions that would finish before end 2006 the legislative, regulatory and normative basis that supports sustained quality universal salt iodization. This includes a special effort to ascertain and enforcement of the imported salt from Russia and Byelorussia (Central and Western regions). A comparably strong effort will also be made to ensure that the salt from PavlodarSol and AtyrauSol undergoes adequate quality assurance by the companies and will be inspected by SES in the markets, and will be followed-through by serious penalty upon non-compliance. The CIP will support strengthening of the Salt Producers Association of Kazakhstan, including obtaining active membership by the newly established salt companies. Anticipating on the demonstration from a recent national USI/IDD survey that iodine nutrition in the population is optimal, the project will promote collaborative work with UNICEF and KAN to devise USI/IDD surveillance for early detection and follow-up of failures in iodized salt markets related to the respective supply sources.

64. As regards flour fortification, the JFPR9052 country-specific goal in Kazakhstan is to reach at least 60% of domestic consumption, i.e. above the project guided average, which implies the need for diligent plans with selected strategic action that can demonstrably lead to the ambitious national goal. Additionally, in view of the “powerhouse” position of Kazakhstan as grain source in Central Asia, the CIP will strengthen the public and private capacities for efficient cross-border trade in fortified foods to the other countries in the JFPR partnership.

¹ The third round MICS in Kazakhstan, December 2005–January 2006, examined a representative sample of 15,000 households, showing that 91.4% of the population uses adequately iodized salt. Shortfalls of quality iodized salt were noted in Pavlodar (North), Akmola and Karaganda (Central) and Atyrau (West Kazakhstan) Provinces, each associated with specific salt supply sources

65. Considerable energy was, and still is, required in Kazakhstan to preserve the agreement of the 2004 Law “On Quality and Safety of Food Products” which mandates the fortification of all the wheat flour of premium and first grade. The previous opposition in the Ministry of Agriculture appears to have abated somewhat, but the pressure needs to be strengthened on overcoming ignorance and ill-advised opposition in the Ministry of Industry and Trade. The CIP will include solid action in support of preserving the mandatory flour fortification requirement by making sure that a newly proposed Law “On Safety of Food Products” shall include a clause to that effect. In this context, the CIP plans to use and expand on advocacy based on the cost-benefits and economic justifications of flour fortification.

66. The project will pay significant attention to social mobilization by working with NGOs and local authorities. The overall purpose of this work would be to expand improved awareness among especially the poorer groups in society, and their leaderships, of the importance and advantages of consuming fortified foods in prevention of the widespread VM Deficiency-associated ill-health, and in overcoming the educational economic backwardness typical for poor communities. This part of the CIP will also include a special effort to bring local authorities toward acceptance of regular purchases of fortified foods as part of Government mandates.

67. The CIP will continue, and aims at finishing by the end of the JFPR9052 period, its multi-faceted support provided to the League of Grain Producers and Bakers in Kazakhstan (LGPBK) and Government agencies in the establishment of all legal, regulatory and normative requirements to follow through and enforce the mandate for flour fortification. As is the case for universal salt iodization, actions in the CIP to support quality assurance of fortified flour by the millers and quality verification/certification of the fortified products by SES (for domestic sale as well as for export) will be geared to making sure that the responsibility for product quality will shift toward, and be sustained through actions by, these entities themselves. The CPO will collaborate with KAN to promote acceptance of forming a functional National Coalition for continued multi-sector collaboration under highest level political patronage to oversee and provide high-level political direction of sustained food fortification.

68. The details of the activities to be supported through JFPR9052 under this strategic direction can be found in the consolidated CIP of Kazakhstan (Annex).

2. Kyrgyz Republic

69. Largely, the previous period of JFPR9052 execution in Kyrgyz Republic had an appearance of “losing steam”. In consequence, the Kyrgyz team was pushed and labored hard during the MTR Workshop in the effort to produce a systematic strategic direction for the future project period.

70. As regards the goal to achieve USI by project’s end, the draft CIP proposal and recent findings on USI² indicate that priority should be directed to addressing the remaining low quality iodized salt in 20% of households, the weak quality assurance practices of some salt manufacturers, the insufficient stability in iodine fortificant procurement and supplies, and the lack of insistence by key food processing industries on using iodized salt as ingredient in the recipe. In addressing the inadequate quality assurance by some salt manufacturers and the low quality of iodized salt used in households, the CIP plans to support the Kyrgyz Association of Salt Producers (KASP) in extending its membership to all viable salt

² The MICS3 in Kyrgyz Republic took place in November–December 2005 and covered more than 5,000 households throughout the country. In total, 76.0% of the households in Kyrgyz Republic used adequate quality iodized salt. In 20.8% of the households the salt was found iodized at below the mandated levels, with little or no difference between Oblasts.

producers and in collaboration with UNICEF and the Kyrgyz Swiss Health Reform Project to raid the markets in selected Raions in the country (with special focus on poor areas), followed by publicity on salt brands found to infringe on the legislated salt iodine levels. The project will encourage KASP to establish a buffer stock of guarantee-priced potassium iodate, based on a scheme of prepaid claims by the salt industries, and it plans to collaborate with UNICEF in preparing and hosting a Central Asia Conference of Food Industries to promote the exclusive use of iodized salt in their manufacturing processes.

71. To achieve fortification of at least one-third of the wheat flour consumed in Kyrgyz Republic, an important priority for the project will be to support the proceedings of hearings in Parliament of a recently introduced draft Law on Wheat Flour Fortification. The CIP will support a consultant to the Prime Minister's Office to analyze and propose feasible economic incentives for promoting fortification in the milling industry (VAT and/or import duties on premix, equipment, etc). Upon enactment of the law, the project will start with arrangements for re-distributing the equipment and remaining premix, where possible, from the non-willing large mills to interested medium and small milling enterprises.

72. Supported by a strategic analysis of targets and opportunities, the team devised the plan that the CIP for the future project period shall pay parallel attention to three areas:

- (i) Direct advocacy and support work with 20–30 import companies to raise the commercial imports of fortified wheat flour from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan by May 2007 to at least 50% of all the wheat flour imported (potential is 50% of the target),
- (ii) Ensure that the fortification capacity presently being established in small and medium mills is fully functional by May 2007 (25% of the target)
- (iii) Strengthen the capacity of the Association of producers of fortified flour and bread products of the Kyrgyz Republic in procurement and supply management of the premix, promotion of procurement and use of fortified flour in food industry customers (macaroni especially), and consolidation/expansion of flour milling capacity among millers not yet included in the project (remaining 25% of the target).

73. Achieving the fortification goals in Kyrgyz Republic in the short time remaining requires re-activation of high-level Government interest in the operating the NFA, and fostering of stronger political concern in public, private and civic networks about the devastation of VM Deficiency in the population, as well as more acknowledgment of the need for partnership efforts to expand quality salt and wheat flour fortification for addressing these problems. The CPO will collaborate with likely-inclined agencies and partners to obtain more tangible buy-in for the proposed strategy at a meeting of the NFA to secure endorsements from collaborating partners for the proposed activities.

74. The details of the activities to be supported through JFPR9052 under this strategic direction can be found in the consolidated CIP of the Kyrgyz Republic (Annex).

3. Mongolia³

75. The analysis of progress and remaining issues to reach USI and realize at least one-third fortification of the wheat flour consumed in Mongolia lead to the following general directions:

³ The progress in Mongolia toward USI over the past decade has been slow in spite of repeated high-level commitments by Government and the generous support by donors. The latest survey data (2004) show that overall, 75% of the population uses quality iodized salt, but in Western Mongolia this is only 40%. It is noteworthy that about 90% of all the edible salt consumed in Mongolia is imported.

- (i) Consolidation of the use of quality iodized salt in urban areas and strengthening of its use in rural areas, with emphasis on Western Mongolia, through evidence of public sector political will, active quality assurance and quality control, as well as by communications for social mobilization;
- (ii) Formulation and enactment of a Law on Mandatory Flour Fortification, encompassing the domestic production as well as import of wheat flour, and swiftly followed-through by the elaboration and establishment of associated normative requirements;
- (iii) Further development of capacities in the private and public sectors for quality assurance and control (inspection and enforcement) of the mandated quality of fortified salt and flour;
- (iv) Established political will to mandate that all salt and wheat flour imported in the country shall be fortified, and that all government food supplies (Hospitals, Orphanages, Special schools, Canteens and Barracks) comply with quality norms adopted under the project.

76. To reach the USI goal and eliminate IDD, the foremost order of priority in Mongolia is to make sure that all the edible salt imported from China (90% of the domestic needs) is adequate quality iodized. The project will work with customs authorities and commercial importers to devise procedures of procurement (specified purchase orders) and border control arrangements that can be sustained after project finalization. In Western Mongolia—among the poorer rural areas in the country—the project will assist small enterprises in training of quality assurance practices to complement previous training and equipping, and it will hold targeted advocacy and trainings with authorities and local NGOs (social grants and contracts) to build community-based pressure to insist on only iodized salt supplies in the food markets and thus promote exclusive market access to quality iodized salt by the population.

77. With respect to flour fortification, foremost attention in the CIP is planned for advocacy and lobbying efforts among Government entities, milling industries, Parliament and the public to ensure the introduction and acceptance of the mandatory flour fortification law by May 2007. At the same time, the project will expand its assistance for establishment of the regulatory and normative requirements that enable efficient follow-through of the Law, once enacted. The project will conduct a study of opportunities and propose decisions to relieve or abolish levies and/or taxes on inputs for flour fortification. About 80% of the grain needs of Mongolia are imported from Russia but the imports are highly variable over time and affected by economic and political influences. The CPO will extend direct collaboration with grain importers, and facilitate smoother supplies and operations to those mills that operate under the project, while facilitating the upgrading of mills by the industry toward higher capacity to produce grade 1 and premium flours. The project will press on Government to pass acts to the effect that public purchases (for schools, hospitals, army, hotels, etc) will be of fortified foods. The CPO will also strengthen its coordination with other agencies working on nutrition in the country, such as UNICEF.

78. To better anchor the achievements of the JFPR accomplishments in ongoing national concerns and oversight, the project will promote adoption of the food fortification agendas in the National Coordinating Committee on Food Security, Safety and Nutrition. This would work toward more confidence that the successes of the project will be sustained upon project termination.

79. The details of the activities to be supported through JFPR9052 under this strategic direction can be found in the consolidated CIP of Mongolia (Annex).

4. Tajikistan

80. Based on an analysis of progress, and in view of the stated project goals of achieving USI and realizing at least 60% fortification of the wheat flour consumed, the following overall directions for the remaining project period became clear:

- (i) Improve on the design, and introduce improved legislation for mandatory fortification of all premium and first grade wheat flour consumed in Tajikistan (including imports);
- (ii) Collaborate with UNICEF in support of collaborative efforts to facilitate the iodization of salt produced by small-scale enterprises in Kathlon Oblast, support quality control checks by SES and/or local authorities of salt transported via trunk road in Kathlon and RSS, and sustain the national quality iodization achievements;⁴
- (iii) Improve quality assurance practices in flour milling industry during production, and quality control efforts by SES and Customs officials on wheat flour imports and on sales by mills and consumer outlets;
- (iv) Further develop and put in place permanent incentives for fortified food producers.

81. Working in close collaboration with UNICEF, the JFPR9052 project in Tajikistan will further facilitate and finish the establishment of seven cooperatives in Kathlon to ensure that the edible salt produced by small-scale enterprises will be quality iodized in the Khuja Mumin factory. The project will support inspections by SES and/or local authorities at road blocks of salt transport from these cooperatives to the consumer markets in Kathlon and RSS Oblasts. Further, the project will assist in establishing the agreements on reduced or abolished VAT on potassium iodate imports and on iodization equipment.

82. Despite the general tendency in Central Asia that smaller mills are taking the place of the large, "soviet style" mills, the majority share in the fortified flour supply in Tajikistan still originates from large mills. This is partly related to the direction of the grain imports, which make up half of the national consumption. A priority for the remaining project period will be on collaboration with commercial Tajik importers to maximize the import of fortified wheat flour from regular Kazakh and/or Uzbek supply sources.

83. While the discussions with Parliament are ongoing, the recommendation by resource persons is that the proposed mandatory fortification law should specifically apply to premium and first grade wheat flour, thus covering all imported flour and at the same time, respecting the differential capacities between small and medium/large mills. The project should pay attention to making sure that the law provides a clause to exempt premix purchases by the mills from VAT.

84. The project will support the use of the new portable testing kits by flour mills to improve their in-plant systems of quality assurance, by SES to verify quality of fortified flour in market outlets, and by Customs to ensure quality of flour import consignments. Finally, the CPO will undertake strong efforts to promote the acceptance in Government and establishment/operation by MOH of an active multi-sector National Food Fortification Alliance to ensure permanent fortification and thus contribute to sustained fortification upon project completion.

⁴ In Tajikistan, 46.4% of households use adequately iodized salt according to the MICS, executed during September–October 2005 among a population-representative sample of more than 6,600 households. The major foci of delayed achievement were in Kathlon (40% non-iodized) and RRS Oblasts (57% non-iodized salt).

85. The details of the activities to be supported through JFPR9052 under this strategic direction can be found in the consolidated CIP of Tajikistan (Annex).

5. Uzbekistan

86. The following priorities were revealed for JFPR9052 in Uzbekistan during the remaining period:

- (i) Continue stimulation of progress and sustain the achievements in quality salt iodization,⁵
- (ii) Collaborate with GAIN and UNICEF to improve and ensure enactment of the proposed legislation for mandatory wheat flour fortification,
- (iii) Support development and applications of regulatory and normative requirements for quality assurance by producers and quality control by authorities on fortified food products.

87. Anticipating upon the enactment of a law on mandatory salt iodization in the nearby future, the project will follow through by supporting a more vibrant and active National Salt Manufacturers Association (NSMA) in Uzbekistan, thereby assisting in promoting coordinated and sustained action when the project completes. The CIP will include specific support to NSMA for building its memberships to include all salt producers, and in strengthening the capacity of NSMA to assist its members by training technicians in practical methods for quality assurance of iodized salt during production. The assistance to NSMA will be directed to establishing habitual practices to assure the quality of iodized as a responsibility of each individual salt company. The project will hire a temporary salt industry expert to strengthen the focus of NSMA's agenda and actions on solving key important technical salt iodization issues for the salt industry in Uzbekistan.

88. In view of usual price fluctuations in the world market, the CPO will collaborate with UNICEF and NSMA in a review of the present KIO_3 procurement arrangements for salt producers, with the specific purpose to reduce and eliminate dependence on agency grants. The CIP will also include actions to advocate for subsidiary decrees or acts that reduce government taxes on KIO_3 and/or salt iodization input procurements. To increase iodized salt awareness and consumption, actions will be explored with Customs on quality control of imported salt and with SES or NGOs on rapid testing of salt brands offered for sale in poor communities, followed by exposure and publicity of non-compliant salt. To further sustain salt iodization efforts by industry, the project will extend on previous work with the Ministry of Education to insert essential knowledge of IDD and the mandate for USI in colleges, high schools and other relevant educational curriculums, including health care professionals.

89. The details of the activities to be supported through JFPR9052 under this strategic direction can be found in the consolidated CIP of Uzbekistan (Annex).

IV. FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS OF REGIONAL SCOPE

A. Consolidating the High-Level Political Will to Sustain Food Fortification

90. Promotion of sustainability is a major aim of the JFPR9052 project. Food fortification can sustain itself when it has become habitual practice in the food industry and accepted in sales channels, and accompanied by regular checking and/or certification by the food inspection, and financed in the product price paid by the consumer. Nothing is automatic about sustainability, however. Once the political concern in Government disappears,

⁵ The MICS3 in Uzbekistan, which took place in March–May 2006 and covered more than 10,000 households throughout the country, demonstrated that 53.1% of households are using adequately iodized salt. The highest use was recorded in Southern (68.5%) and Tashkent (71.1%) Oblasts.

vigilance by inspection declines and the awareness of the public fades. History teaches that under this scenario, food fortification will soon fall victim to the constant cost-containment pressure in food industry. Sustaining food fortification requires an organizational arrangement at high political level, based on continued public, private and civic interests, which is demanding evidence of success from fortification monitoring to inform the respective leaders and broker agreements on ongoing investment to continue food fortification.

91. It is becoming increasingly apparent that a significant part of the remaining barriers in the participant countries toward attaining the fortification goals is partly related to weaknesses of political will. Despite the knowledge that food fortification investment yields returns among the highest of all available development initiatives and exceeding those in trade liberalization, water and sanitation, climate, sanitation, and so on⁶, the commitments expressed by national leaders⁷ to tackling VM Deficiencies have barely been translated into a real strong will to act through leadership of a multi-sector National Coalition, and to keep on acting to make fortification sure and enduring.

92. The high-level political will in Kazakhstan, clearly apparent at the time of the Parliament's decision in 2004 to mandate flour fortification, is being seriously tested. In Kyrgyz Republic, the change of Presidency was followed by political instability, preventing a functional National Coalition formally established under the Prime Minister. In Mongolia, the Government's action to promote salt and flour fortification has remained centered within the Ministries of Health and Agriculture around program formulation. And the Ministers of Health in Tajikistan and in Uzbekistan continue pondering an appropriate composition for a National Coalition. When the project has demonstrated that the national fortification goals are feasible, failure to sustain the achievements is no longer caused by technical or financial reasons, but related to feeble political concern at high level in Government, in combination with halfhearted resolve by the food industry and weak insistence among consumers.

93. Efforts of executive committees have been indicated in the CIP plans above for stimulating functional National Coalitions and joint high-level oversight. These efforts should be guided from the partnership of international agencies and support groups in the region, and be buttressed by technical assistance and information sharing through RCAO. The policy dialogue with UNICEF Representatives should be intensified on the need for and establishment of National Coalitions. The experiences in JFPR countries to promote periodic meetings of National Coalitions should be exchanged, and their outcomes monitored for effectiveness in rallying the political interests in collaborative oversight, joint use of the results from fortification monitoring, and forward-looking agreements to maintain the investments in fortification from national sources.

B. Strengthening Management Skills in Project Execution and Completion

94. The quality of reporting in the draft CIP documents offered at the MTR Workshop uncovered a need for skills development among CPO staff and their collaborators for the systematic reporting and finalization of steps in the project cycle. As applied to the midterm time point, the CIP proposals should have reflected previous project design and characterized by reporting on specific accomplishments during 1st phase implementation and information from monitoring in anticipation on the measurement of results of evaluation. While there was no shortage in the texts of previous and present actions, past and ongoing accomplishments, or various proposals for next JFPR assistance, but the articulation showed severe limitations in terminology and language used as well as their consistence, formatting of subject components and time frame, and more importantly, in systematic organization in

⁶ Copenhagen Consensus, August 2004.

⁷ Starting out at the Summit for Children in 1990, and repeated since then at various UN forums, lately at the UN Special Session for Children, July 2002.

an agreed-upon project execution reporting framework. This may not bode well for the remaining project period, which will be at least partly focused on capturing the outcomes and results from the JFPR investments and the activities undertaken in partnership with others. Looking forward, therefore, there would appear to be a significant need for CPO staff to become more versed and skilled in the agreed-upon analytical and planning process adopted by ADB—i.e. the Design and Monitoring Framework.

C. Regional Follow-up Actions to Reach and Consolidate Goal Achievements

95. The facilitation of cross-border trade has been recognized as an important element in the JFPR project. Most of the action for trade facilitation has been in establishing normative requirements for fortified flour, and in reduction or abolishment of flour milling-associated tariffs and taxes. These actions by themselves do not necessarily secure cross-border trade in fortified flour, however. In achieving the flour fortification goals in Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia and Tajikistan, the national wheat product consumption depends for a significant share on the export of wheat and wheat flour from neighboring countries. In Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan, the import from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan constitutes at least half of the country's consumption need and the import shares of fortified flour have been recognized in the CIP of these countries as a crucial part of the overall strategy to achieve the JFPR goal. A similar outlook exists for Mongolia since more than 80% of the wheat originates from Russia.

96. An export transaction, apart from the bank guarantee, depends on the purchase order made by the trader in the importing country. Ways should be found for the executive committees in the above-mentioned countries to influence such purchase orders toward increasing the proportion of flour that is fortified prior to export. This requires cross-border collaboration. For the exporting companies as well as for the exporting country, selling fortified flour is advantageous due to the additional value. It would seem that the project's collaborative linkages among the countries and between the MOH's and the flour miller's associations within countries should offer mechanisms to devise influence in these trades.

97. As attested in the CIPs, the JFPR country teams will continue the ongoing collaborations with UNICEF and other support organizations to stimulate achievement of the USI goals in each country. Regionally, this collaboration calls for collaboration toward ensuring and consolidating the exclusive use of iodized salt in the food processing industry. UNICEF is planning to hold a joint conference with the salt producer associations to stimulate sales of iodized salt to the key bread bakeries, daily and meat processing, vegetable conserves and pasta industries.

D. Scientific Support by KAN

98. The midterm review offered a mechanism for each country to link the project activities and outputs with the use of human, material and financial inputs, thus beginning to explore better understanding why a policy was or wasn't effective, and helping to improve upon future project implementation. For their decisions on allocation of future resources, decision makers will be demanding of this information, including the demonstration that the fortified food supplies have had the desired health, social and economic developmental benefits. In the near future the critical need will be to capture the changes in these benefits that can be attributed to fortification. The sentinel studies will give useful information although their design is not intended to generate data for attribution but for demonstrating efficiency.

99. Working with UNICEF and CDC, KAN is extending its laboratory capacity for iodine monitoring to serve as regional source to ascertain the proficiency in national laboratories to conduct urinary iodine measurements. Similar capacity will be useful also for laboratory-based assessments to monitor nutrition achievements from flour fortification (hemoglobin,

and serum ferritin and folic acid). Working with KAN, and perhaps by connecting to the MCH Forum, it is recommended that the project seeks ways to include in-country designs in the final evaluation to conclusions on biological change in the population that can be attributed to the consumption of fortified salt and flour.

100. Via regional and country-based approaches, the JFPR project is providing a significant source for capacity development of participant countries to reach national goals in social and economic development. KAN operates a region-wide “CAFF project” website which deserves to become permanent. An important future news source should be the information collected and reviewed by National Coalitions. Obtaining information on nutrition progress in the population is facilitated by the laboratory infrastructure in KAN that has continuous capacity to serve in specific USI and flour fortification data collection of impacts. It is recommended that in consultation with UNICEF and national authorities the KAN support should be assessed for ensured continuation.



JFPR 9052 REG PROJECT

Sustainable Food Fortification in Central Asian Countries and Mongolia



MIDTERM PROJECT REVIEW REGIONAL WORKSHOP

11–14 September 2006, Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyz Republic

AGENDA

Monday 11 September 2006

- 11:00–15:00 Surface Travel Bishkek to Cholpon-Ata
- 15:00-15:30 Lunch
- 15:30-16:00 Registration of participants. Distribution of materials.
- 16:00-16:20 **Opening ceremony**
- ADB, UNICEF, KAN, Government of Japan
- 16:20-17:00 **Introduction to the Workshop**
- R. Muzafarov, A. Timmer
- 17:00-18:30 **Review of Project Financial Management at Country Level**
- M. Kystaubayev, R. Muzafarov
- 18:30- Dinner

Tuesday 12 September 2006

- 09:00-10:00 **National Food Fortification Policy – International Best Practices**
- A. Timmer, F. van der Haar
- 10:00-11:00 **Advocacy for Political Commitments**
- Video from Mongolia, Tajikistan, and discussion
- 11:00-11:30 Coffee break
- Project Implementation Progress and Revised Country Investment Plans (CIPs)**
- 11:30-13:00 **Kyrgyzstan**
- 13:00-14:00 Lunch
- 14:00-15:30 **Kazakhstan**
- 15:30-16:00 Coffee break
- 16:00-17:30 **Mongolia**
- 18:30 Dinner
- After dinner **Country Teams Work on Revisions of CIPs**
- Resource persons will be available for Q&A (see list below)

Wednesday	13 September 2006
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	Continuation of Project Implementation Progress and Revised CIPs
09:00-10:30	Tajikistan
10:30-11:00	Coffee break
11:00-12:30	Uzbekistan
12:30-13:30	Roundtable Discussion on the Monitoring of Quality Control and Assurance on the Iodized Salt
	- F.Ospanova, F.van der Haar, R.Muzafarov
13:30-14:30	Lunch
14:30-16:00	Project Monitoring and Evaluation
	- F. van der Haar, R. Hiraoka, R. Muzafarov
16:00-16:30	Coffee break
16:30-18:00	Discussion on Country Communication Strategies
	- R. Khaidarov, A. Timmer, R. Muzafarov
18:00- After dinner	Dinner Country Teams Work on Revisions of the CIPs

Thursday	14 September 2006
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09:00-13:00	Bilateral Discussions with Country Teams on Revised CIP Plans and Budgets
13:00-14:00	Lunch
14:00-15:30	Discussion on Project Management
15:30-16:30	Closing Session
	Departure of participants (depending on flight's schedule)

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Mongolia Country Team	R. Muzafarov, F. Ospanova
Tajikistan Country Team	A. Timmer, S.Tazhibayev
Uzbekistan Country Team	R. Muzafarov, R. Khaidarov

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