

Consensus Statement

The Forum was an outstanding success in reaching consensus on a number of major issues. They will form the basis of follow-up activities—strategies, policies, and actions—at the regional and national levels.

We present the Consensus Statement at the beginning of this report to emphasize the importance of the principles agreed upon at the Forum.

After four days of deliberation, participants from eight nations and a number of international, technical, and donor agencies attending the Manila Forum on Food Fortification Policy agreed on the following set of principles, strategies, and actions:

PRINCIPLES: VISION FOR 2010

- All people of the region should have access to affordable, safe, and efficacious fortified foods as a long-term and permanent commitment to the elimination of micronutrient malnutrition.
- All salt intended for human or animal consumption should be iodized.
- Flour fortification with essential vitamins and minerals should be an integral part of all strategies to control and prevent micronutrient deficiencies.
- Fortification, particularly with iron, vitamin A, zinc, and folic acid, of staple foods like rice, cereals, and oil as well as condiments and industrially processed complementary foods, should be encouraged.
- Food laws should be reviewed and amended to ensure that they are supportive and enabling to the addition of all essential micronutrients in appropriate food carriers.
- Public policies and regulations that constrain or impede investment in food fortification to reduce micronutrient malnutrition should be reviewed and amended.
- While the cost of food fortification must ultimately be borne by the consumer, it is recognized that a transition period of cost sharing and public financial involvement may be necessary.
- It is recognized that food fortification is part of a comprehensive strategy that includes supplementation, dietary diversification, breastfeeding promotion, and other public health measures.
- Achieving this vision will involve coordinated action at national and regional levels.

NATIONAL STRATEGIES

- Open channels of communication in order to continue and expand public-, private-, and civil-sector dialogue and partnership at the highest national levels.

NATIONAL ACTIONS

- Designate a National Core Group, initially coordinated by the National Country Focal Point at this Forum, to further develop the recommendations and actions discussed in the country work groups at the Forum and wherever necessary consider the following steps.
- Hold a national advocacy meeting engaging the highest national policymaking levels.
- Designate a multisectoral national team to prepare a 10-year investment program, identifying priority actions for both public and private sector to create an enabling environment for fortification and mechanisms to minimize costs, enhance supply, and create demand.
- Update and widely disseminate data on prevalence of micronutrient deficiencies including the insertion of micronutrient-related data collection into demographic health surveys and other ongoing health surveys.
- Collect and analyze data on nutrition, consumption, industrial capacity, market distribution, and other factors needed to identify appropriate and effective vehicles for fortification.
- Collect and disseminate information demonstrating the impact of reducing micronutrient deficiencies on economic growth and productivity or, if needed, undertake studies for this purpose.
- Review and recommend financial incentives for food fortification, such as reduced tariffs and taxes.
- Develop a monitoring framework to evaluate the success of fortification.
- Continue, expand, and follow-up on the public-private sector dialogue initiated at this Forum.

REGIONAL STRATEGIES

- Develop regional institutions as centers of excellence for harmonizing data collection, conducting bioavailability and efficacy trials, and managing food fortification programs (including food science, quality assurance, epidemiology, food safety, and social marketing).
- Assess the potential for affordable, industrially produced, fortified complementary foods as an emerging priority for food policy to support child development.
- Develop a framework for drafting and proposing harmonized regional and international trade standards and guidelines for food fortification.

- Develop a framework that promotes an enabling environment for the fortification of foods to protect public health.

REGIONAL ACTIONS

- Create a Regional Core Group comprised of the Asian Development Bank, Micronutrient Initiative, International Life Sciences Institute, and the National Focal Points from the eight participating groups to develop further the Consensus Principles of the Manila Forum as well as the following Regional Actions. The Regional Core Group will seek collaboration with United Nations (UN) and bilateral development agencies and develop continuing consultations with World Trade Organization and consumer organizations.
- Advocate the presentation and discussion of the Manila Forum principles, strategies, and actions in appropriate regional fora such as the annual meetings of the Subcommittee on Health of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the regional committees of the World Health Organization (WHO).
- Advocate the insertion of the Manila Forum principles into the appropriate consultations of health and trade organizations.
- Sponsor discussions to harmonize standards, regulations, and guidelines for fortification of flour and other staples (cereals, condiments, cooking oil, and complementary foods) and propose these for the endorsement of regional bodies such as Codex, ASEAN, SAARC, and other appropriate organizations.
- Include micronutrient malnutrition issues, including the consensus principles of the Manila Forum, in the agenda of regional expert group consultations such as associations of pediatricians, nutritionists, and reproductive health specialists.
- Identify regional institutions for training and capacity-building activities in cooperation with groups such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, WHO, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, United Nations Children's Fund, and other UN and bilateral agencies.
- Create a corps of regional food-fortification specialists to consult regarding both industrial feasibility and public health assessment.
- Act as a clearinghouse for food fortification information including the development of a World Wide Web site.
- Link to Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research initiatives to develop micronutrient-rich varieties of rice and other staples.

Public-Private Collaboration in Food Fortification: Sharing Risk and Reward

Glen F. Maberly

Director, Program Against Micronutrient Malnutrition
Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University, Atlanta, USA
and

Jack Bagriansky

Consultant, Micronutrient Initiative, Ottawa, Canada

BACKGROUND

The scientific community unveiled the true nature of micronutrient malnutrition in the 1970s and 1980s, positioning the elimination of micronutrient deficiencies as a global priority. The overt effects—childhood and maternal death, blindness, anemia, and goiter—are only the tip of the iceberg. Whole populations are unable to achieve their full mental and physical potential as parents, workers, and citizens due to reduced IQ, lower energy, lower resistance to diseases, or stunted growth. In 1990, at the World Summit for Children, many leaders committed their countries to eliminate iodine deficiency disorders (IDD) and vitamin A deficiency (VAD) and substantially reduce iron deficiency. Economists have estimated high returns from investments in the elimination of micronutrient malnutrition. Thus, eliminating these deficiencies is a health, social development, and economic development bargain. While micronutrient deficiencies depress the gross domestic product (GDP) by as much as 5 percent annually, a comprehensive and sustainable solution would cost less than one third of one percent of GDP.

SUCCESS IN SALT IODIZATION

Household consumption of iodized salt has increased globally from less than 5 percent in 1990 to more than 75 percent in 2000. There has been some progress in the elimination of VAD, but little progress in iron deficiency elimination.

Success in reducing iodine deficiency has come after the public sector accepted a number of key factors. These included

- accepting the magnitude and widespread nature of the problem of IDD;
- accepting the “universal” application of iodized salt;
- accepting the efficacy and safety of the fortificant (iodate) even though this was not used in the US or some other developed countries;
- allowing salt as a carrier although some felt this was not a healthy product;
- overcoming the view that all food should be natural and not modified through fortification;
- supporting large companies as well as cottage industries to iodize salt;
- focusing on where success was easy and not just the most remote places; and
- overcoming the resistance to working with and supporting private companies.

Key gatekeepers here included the health and development communities. There are very similar issues that relate to fortification of other foods. Discussion on these issues will be at the heart of this meeting. Perhaps the difference in approach was the recognition that salt is not produced or sold by governments, agencies, or health experts. Laws and standards are helpful in providing the legal framework for fortification but have rarely been enforced on producers with penalties. What is most important is clarification of the respective roles and responsibilities of government, development agencies, and private salt companies. This means creating an effective alliance and understanding about who owns the products.

FORTIFICATION OF OTHER PRODUCTS

Between 1990 and 2000 there have been more than 20 international meetings to address food fortification. At these meetings the public and development sectors have been dominant. The issues have largely focused on

- which foods could be fortified;
- which fortificant should be used;
- whether the population could be poisoned; and
- how selective the public sector should be with private partners.

It is time for the public and private sectors to agree on these issues and set appropriate guidelines and policies.

We review here public-private sector collaboration towards the elimination of micronutrient malnutrition. Special emphasis is given to the potential role of large food companies. The purpose is to examine current and projected markets as well as to define perceptions and barriers to reaching micronutrient-deficient populations with fortified products. We took a three-part approach.

First, we examined statements on the subject of public-private sector collaboration at international and national meetings and in key publications over the past decade. While the rhetoric calling for collaboration with the private sector has been consistent, real partnerships have been rare. It is clear that there is a gap between what is being said and what is being done. Communication barriers remain between the public and private sectors and controversies exist on how to move ahead. These are inhibiting progress.

Second, we looked at the consumption of basic staple foods such as wheat, maize, vegetable oils, and sugar in countries around the world. A rough analysis was made on the potential impact if these products were universally fortified. This analysis indicates that there are opportunities to deliver significant proportions of daily requirements to average consumers in many countries where micronutrient deficiencies are widespread.

Third, we undertook a survey of some major food companies operating at the transnational,

regional, and national levels. The barriers to food fortification and public-private sector collaboration were documented. The leading barriers perceived by company representatives included

- lack of public awareness of micronutrient malnutrition;
- ambiguity of health claims;
- lack of a “level playing field”; and
- no research consensus on the need for fortified products.

Technical and production issues, including incremental cost, were perceived as less significant while market issues were perceived as the most important barriers. Most company officials surveyed were well aware of micronutrient issues. Food fortification fits well with the mission statements of most food companies. Large food companies and especially multinational companies penetrate the high end of all food markets. Many of these large food industries report that more than 80 percent of the general population have regular access to their products and marketing messages. For the responding companies, an average of about 45 percent of all consumers came from the highest (A and B) income quintals; about 50 percent from the middle (C and D) income segments; and less than 5 percent from the lowest income quintal. Although the share of the lowest-end market will grow significantly in the next 10 years, it will remain relatively small. However, the share of the middle income quintals is significant and growing. The impact of fortification can be greatly increased by fortifying 4-5 products in each country rather than relying on only one food vehicle.

POTENTIAL INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Advancement of food fortification as a viable solution to micronutrient malnutrition will require investments by both public and private sectors. Aligning the opportunities identified in our surveys, as shown in the following Table, indicates the complementary role each sector can take in supporting this.

Investment Opportunities – Merging Interests

Public Sector	Private Sector
National Advocacy	Awareness of Industry Professionals
Public Education	Marketing
Data Bank	Consumer Research
Product Development	Product Development
Large-scale Demonstrations	Proving Health Claims
Regulatory and Inspection Systems	Industry Best Practices and Quality Assurance
Tariff and Tax Incentives	Flexible Investment Criteria
Capital Investments in Plants	Capital Investments in Plants
Start-up Premix Costs	Premix and Recurrent Costs
Public Markets	Expand Niche to Mass Markets
Training and Capacity Building	Training and Capacity Building

Success in food fortification requires the formulation of an alliance that recognizes the important role of the private sector. There are roles for governments, UN agencies, development banks, the NGO community, academic community, and civic community. This alliance must recognize that the effort is to be focused on the citizen, the voter, and the consumer. These are the same people. An effective and long-term solution also means respecting the need for the private sector to make a profit.