

Annex 1

The Arusha Statement on Food Fortification

Statement Delivered by H.E. Tumusiime Rhoda Peace,
Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, African Union,
on behalf of the Summit Co-Conveners

I am pleased to make this Arusha Statement on Food Fortification on behalf of the Summit Co-Conveners in my capacity as a member of the board of directors of the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition.

The first ever Summit on fortification was opened by the Prime Minister of the United Republic of Tanzania, the Rt. Hon. Mizengo Kayanza Peter Pinda, and was addressed by HM King Letsie III of the Kingdom of Lesotho, the AU Nutrition Champion. Four hundred and fifty delegates from 57 countries attended, including 29 country delegations, as well as leaders from business, academia and international organizations.

We took stock of global food fortification and assessed its role and potential in addressing public health goals, by tackling “hidden hunger” or micronutrient deficiencies – which cause 10% of global disease, inhibit human development, and perpetuate poverty and deprivation.

Preventable deficiencies of critical vitamins and minerals such as vitamins A and D, iron, iodine, folic acid, and zinc, contribute to the occurrence of up to three million child deaths annually. The best available estimates are that two billion people are affected by micronutrient malnutrition, but the true burden is probably even greater, as we lack precise data. This has far-reaching effects on individuals, and also impedes the economic development of nations. GDP losses from undernutrition can be 2%–3% per year.

The central message of this Summit is that food fortification should become a critical pillar of national food and nutrition security plans. Unless we can rapidly scale up the availability, and the consumption, of fortified foods, the achievement of some of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be impossible. Food fortification is a vital tool to make progress towards the World Health Assembly goal to reduce anemia among women of reproductive age.

In the words of HM King Letsie III, the AU Nutrition Champion, we need to put food fortification back on the development agenda.

According to the Copenhagen Consensus, the return on investment in food fortification is one of the highest development

dividends. For example, in the case of iodine, it saves as much as US\$30 in higher medical and non-medical expenditures for every \$1 spent. Salt iodization costs pennies – 20 cents per person per year. A rough estimate for LMIC suggests the cost:benefit ratio of fortification is around 30:1.

Progress has accelerated in the past decade. Today there are salt iodization programs in approximately 140 countries worldwide, 83 countries have mandated at least one kind of cereal grain fortification, 20 countries edible oils, 9 countries sugar, and several others rice, milk, and condiments. But without further investment, we risk losing this momentum. We have the unprecedented opportunity to virtually eliminate iodine deficiency if we scale up salt iodization efforts. By effectively fortifying grains with iron, we can expect to achieve a 2.4% reduction per annum in anemia. Fortification of wheat flour with folic acid in 18 countries in Africa and Asia could prevent the occurrence of more than 50,000 debilitating neural tube defects annually. We cannot lose these opportunities.

Food systems and eating habits are changing rapidly due to urbanization, changing climate, land and water use, and a younger population. While food fortification alone cannot end malnutrition, it is critical to micronutrient deficiency prevention and control strategies, and is an underexploited public health tool.

What are the critical areas for action highlighted at this Summit?

- **First, modest but new investment is essential.** Fortification is cost-effective and is largely self-sustainable, and costs are built into markets and typically do not require further or continuous public subsidy. Governments need to invest in technical support, oversight and compliance.

The new investments are needed to build, improve and sustain fortification programs. They are small in relation to leveraged costs, cost per beneficiary and overall returns, and are tiny as a proportion of health spending.

For example, it was estimated that the additional donor



H.E. Tumusiime Rhoda Peace, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture of the African Union, delivers the Arusha Statement.



Greg S Garrett, GAIN (extreme right), leads a panel discussion on fortification in Tanzania with Vincent Assay (Government of Tanzania) and Erin Smith (HKI).

costs over 15 years to build, improve and sustain fortification in 25 LMIC for multiple food vehicles would be US\$150 million. This could effectively cover an additional billion people. Further investment in fortification would trigger significant co-investment by the private sector and would motivate national governments to allocate resources.

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- **Second, there is need for a major effort to improve the oversight and enforcement of food fortification standards and regulations.** Poor compliance with laws and regulations limits the potential for impact and undermines effectiveness. Available data show adequate compliance with standards as low as 50% in many contexts. Governments should improve their inspection and enforcement systems to ensure high-quality fortification and a level playing field for the producers. Effective regulatory monitoring and enforcement will notably require more robust national budget allocations.
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- **Third, there is a need to generate more evidence to guide fortification policy and program design,** to continually improve programs, and to demonstrate impact. For example, there is a lack of detail regarding foods consumed by various target groups, which limits our understanding of potential food vehicles, the use of fortified foods and the quantification of the dietary gap we must address in the case of some nutrients.
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- **Fourth, progress requires more transparent accountability and global reporting.** We support the call for a global observatory or annual report on the state of fortification.
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- **Fifth, continuing advocacy is a high priority,** and we will work together with stakeholders such as the SUN Movement and the African Union to advocate for greater attention by governments. Finally, **we ask the Summit Technical Advisory Group to continue to work together post-Summit, and to consolidate and elaborate these recommendations and chart a path forward by January 2016.**

Achievement of these recommendations needs to be underpinned by better leadership and accountability within the sector. Increased attention to policy support, quality control, monitoring compliance and assessment of impact are needed to extend and maximize the potential of food fortification to improve levels of nutrition and consequently health.

We leave Arusha with a determination to build a new movement – a future fortified with improved food and nutrition security. We have the tools. We need to finish the job that was started a hundred years ago and make the benefits of this simple and cost-effective approach to improving diets available to all.

September 11, 2015, Arusha, Tanzania

“We leave Arusha with a determination to build a new movement”

The Government of the Republic of Tanzania and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition are Summit Co-Hosts. Summit Co-Conveners include the African Union (AU), the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), UNICEF, USAID, WFP and the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement. The Technical Advisory Group for the Summit includes the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), ETH Zurich, the Food Fortification Initiative (FFI), FHI 360/Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance (FANTA), Helen Keller International (HKI), the Iodine Global Network (formerly ICCIDD GN), the Micronutrient Forum, the Micronutrient Initiative (MI), PATH, Project Healthy Children (PHC), *Sight and Life*, and Smarter Futures.