

CERFAM'S BULLETIN

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7TH



“ THE IMPORTANCE OF FOOD FORTIFICATION IN THE FIGHT AGAINST HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION IN AFRICA



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CERFAM
CENTRE D'EXCELLENCE REGIONAL
CONTRE LA FAIM ET LA MALNUTRITION



EDITORIAL



“ Africa has 13.8 million wasted children, 9.7 million overweight and 58.7 million children under 5 who are stunted, a major problem on the continent.

Malnutrition remains a major public health problem and an obstacle to the socio-economic development of the individual, the community, and the society. Its main forms are wasting (acute malnutrition), growth retardation, micronutrient deficiency (vitamins and minerals), overweight or obesity. The situation is particularly alarming in sub-Saharan Africa. Progress to date remains insufficient and no country is on track to meet the global nutrition goals by 2025.

According to the latest estimates from the 2019 African Development Bank (AfDB) report, Africa has 13.8 million wasted children, 9.7 million overweight and 58.7 million children under 5 years of age. are stunted, a major problem on the continent¹. This situation is likely to deteriorate further due to the devastating health and socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

To address this situation, African countries have put in place policies and measures to promote the continued availability and access to safe, nutritious, and adequate amounts of food. Particular attention is paid to good dietary practices for the groups most vulnerable to malnutrition, in particular women and children. Among the proposed measures are diet-based strategies such as food diversification and fortification as well as nutrition education, as well as public health and food security measures.

Indeed, food fortification remains one of the most effective and cost-effective interventions to combat micronutrient deficiencies, with a significant impact on the development of human capital and on public health, particularly among pregnant women and young people. children. Most of these interventions are sustainable, able to promote the well-being and health of populations, and which place more emphasis on improving the nutrition of young children, as indicated by Ms. Marie-Pierre Poirier,

Director UNICEF Regional for West and Central Africa in the interview she gave us (page 5).

Widely recognized, supported, and practiced in many parts of the world, as well as in some African countries, **food fortification has a long history. It is a process of selecting cultivated plant varieties with the aim of increasing their nutritional value** (biofortification) or **adding small amounts of micronutrients** (vitamins, mineral nutrients, and amino acids) **to staple foods in order to provide consumers with a sufficient amount of nutrients believed to improve their nutritional profile².**

Good nutrition is not only a result, but it is also a fundamental investment in the development of human and therefore economic capital of a country in the long term. Nutrition is at the heart of the “Feed Africa” and “Improve the Quality of Life of the People of Africa” programs, which are among the five main priorities of the African Development Bank. For the Bank, eradicating hunger and ensuring the nutritional security of populations can only be done with political will and determination, as Mr. Akinwumi Adesina, President of the African Development Bank reminds us (page 11).

To date, 42 African countries have committed to strengthening their nutrition policies. Members of the SUN Movement, these countries have a national nutrition plan that brings together different sectors and stakeholders in an intergovernmental approach to tackle malnutrition. In addition, 39 of these member countries have mandatory food fortification legislation, a formula for saving millions of lives in Africa and around the world.

Enjoy your reading.

¹ https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Generic-Documents/Continental_Nutrition_Accountability_Scorecard_Report-FR.pdf

² *Fortification alimentaire : une stratégie pour prévenir et réduire les impacts du coronavirus en Haïti - SUN (scalingupnutrition.org)*

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Article written by Ms. Laouratou Dia, Nutrition Specialist, WFP Côte d'Ivoire, in collaboration with Ms. Clemence Maurin, regional manager of food fortification, WFP regional office for West and Central Africa

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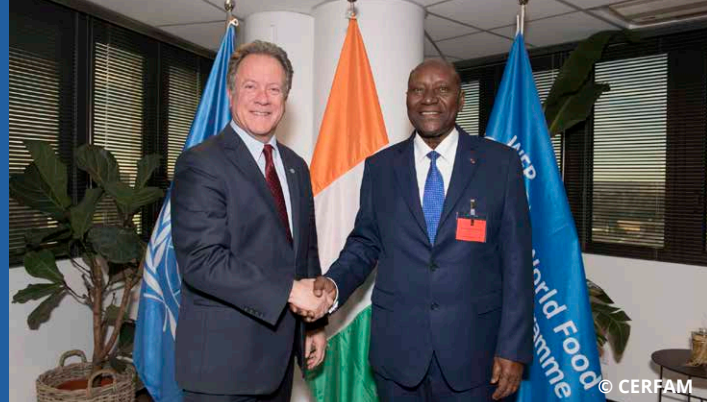
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Article retrieved from WFP Innovation <https://innovation.wfp.org/project/sanku>

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Article written by Ms. Alimata Coulibaly, Director of LES PRECUIITS GLP / Aliments d'Afrique and National Coordinator of the French regional project MISOLA Côte d'Ivoire.



ABOUT CERFAM

The Regional Centre against Hunger and Malnutrition (CERFAM) is the result of a strategic partnership agreement between the government of Côte d'Ivoire and the World Food Program (WFP) to support African countries in elimination of hunger and malnutrition.

CERFAM is a platform for exchange, partnership, and cooperation, which allows countries to have access to the best available expertise to support them in their efforts to progress towards the implementation of the SDGs, in particular SDG 2.

CERFAM facilitates and mobilizes skills, promotes and implementation of good practices and sustainable solutions in the fight against hunger and malnutrition.

Its mission is carried out through innovative approaches and the networking of national, regional and international actors in order to produce tangible and lasting results.

Based on its 4 pillars of research, advocacy and communication, partnerships and technical assistance, CERFAM's interventions take advantage of South-South Cooperation and capacity building to support national and regional priorities in the area of food security and nutrition.

Priority areas of action for CERFAM:

- Support to governments, institutions and partners in the formulation, planning, implementation and monitoring of food and nutrition security policies and interventions.
- Support for national school feeding programs based on local purchases in support of social safety nets and the development of the local economy.
- Strengthen the resilience of individuals, communities and local systems to cope with cyclical and recurring shocks.
- Prioritization of multisectoral and innovative nutrition strategies that are part of a sustainable food system.
- Optimization of the food value chain and support for the development of efficient and sustainable supply systems to benefit the incomes of small producers.



01

HIGH LEVEL CONSULTATION ON FOOD FORTIFICATION TO ADDRESS MICRONUTRIENT DEFICIENCIES OR HIDDEN HUNGER IN AFRICA

Why food fortification?

Food strengthening, also known as food fortification, is widely recognized as a preventive, effective, proven, and cost-effective public health strategy for ensuring optimal nutrition by reducing health costs in the long term. Currently, many countries in sub-Saharan Africa have adopted programs to fortify one or more foods for their populations.

Remarkable successes have been obtained in the case of the fortification of flour with various vitamins of group B and margarine with vitamin A. Côte d'Ivoire was one of the pioneer countries of fortification in West Africa with the fortification of salt, oil and wheat flour.

CERFAM invests in food fortification in Africa

In this context, the Government of Côte d'Ivoire and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) through CERFAM will organize a high-level consultation under the theme: **"Food fortification: which dietary approach to reduce deficiencies in micronutrients in Africa?"**. This event will be organized in close collaboration with African Union and West African Health Organization (WAHO) and will be held in Abidjan, in September 2021.

The consultation is fully in line with African Union's Agenda 2063, the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Growth and Transformation of Agriculture for Shared Prosperity and Better Living Conditions of the Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy 2015-2025 and the United Nations 2030 Agenda, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 2.

The consultation will be an opportunity to encourage discussions and the sharing of experiences and good practices between different countries and stakeholders involved in food fortification at global, regional, and national levels. Likewise, strong operational actions will be proposed to governments, development partners and other key actors to accompany and support the efforts of African countries for elimination of malnutrition in all its forms.

The consultation will bring together representatives of governments, regional and sub-regional organizations, the Network of African Parliamentarians, development partners, oversight and regulatory agencies, private sector, academia, and civil society organizations.

In its role as a catalyst and knowledge centre for good practices, CERFAM works with governments, technical and financial partners as well as other actors to guarantee access for all to adequate healthy, diversified, and nutritious food.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FOOD ENRICHMENT IN THE FIGHT AGAINST MALNUTRITION

+ Interview with Marie Pierre POIRIER / **Regional Director of UNICEF for West and Central Africa**



02

1
WHAT CRITICAL MEASURES ARE REQUIRED TO COMBAT MALNUTRITION IN ALL ITS FORMS, PARTICULARLY, MICRONUTRIENT DEFICIENCIES IN AFRICA?

Every child has the right to nutrition. Today, the need for optimal nutrition has never been greater in West and Central Africa³. While being home to 11 per cent of the world's children, the region accounts for 20 per cent of the global burden of stunting. The absolute number of stunted children is on the rise, despite a decrease in the prevalence⁴. It is time for renewed collective action on ending child malnutrition in all its forms. The path to nutritious diets, essential nutrition services and positive nutrition practices demands a shared purpose, with adequate investments from governments, the private sector, and communities. Addressing malnutrition, including micronutrient deficiencies, requires a holistic and multisectoral approach, with a focus on the prevention of malnutrition, and key measures to bridge immediate and long-term solutions, to create conditions that empower communities and improve their diets and resilience.

2
HOW IS UNICEF SUPPORTING THESE EFFORTS IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA AND AT THE CONTINENTAL LEVEL? WHAT HAVE BEEN THE PROGRESS MADE TO DATE?

Nutrition has long been at the core of UNICEF's work. The primary objective of our nutrition programmes is to prevent maternal and child malnutrition in all its forms across the life cycle⁵. When efforts to prevent malnutrition fall short, our programmes aim to ensure early detection and treatment of children suffering from life-threatening malnutrition. To achieve this, UNICEF proposes a system-wide approach that strengthens the ability of key systems to deliver nutritious diets, and optimal nutrition services and practices. Food systems⁶ are at the centre of this approach, and more than ever with the lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic and the opportunity offered by the upcoming Food Systems Summit and Nutrition for Growth Summit.

Today, thanks to our collective action, the proportion of children under 6 months exclusively breastfed has gradually increased in the region, from 23% around 2005 to

37,4% IN 2020⁷

⁷ UNICEF Global Nutrition database, 2020

³ <https://www.unicef.org/wca/>

⁴ UNICEF/WHO/The World Bank Group joint child malnutrition estimates: levels and trends in child malnutrition, 2020 edition

⁵ UNICEF Nutrition Strategy 2020–2030. UNICEF, <https://www.unicef.org/media/92031/file/UNICEF%20Nutrition%20Strategy%202020-2030.pdf>

⁶ "The food system comprises the policies, services and actors needed to ensure a population's access to good diets – defined as diets that are nutritious, safe, affordable and sustainable", UNICEF Nutrition Strategy 2020–2030.

Today, as a result of our collective action, the proportion of infants under six months exclusively breastfed has gradually increased in the region from 23% around 2005 to 37.4% in 2020. This remarkable achievement proves that positive change for nutrition is possible at scale. But more needs to be done so that the region is on track to achieve the Global Nutrition targets⁷.

3 HOW CAN FOOD FORTIFICATION BE LEVERAGED WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF ACTION ON NUTRITION (2016 - 2025), THE TOKYO 2020 NUTRITION FOR GROWTH SUMMIT (N4G) AND THE 2021 FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT?



The United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition and upcoming world summits are unique opportunities to renew our commitment to fortification at scale.

Supporting countries to improve the quality of children's foods, food environments and practices is essential, as food systems bears a critical responsibility for the quality of

children's diets. As part of this effort, UNICEF, in collaboration with our partners, commits to maintain its long-standing support to mandatory and large-scale food fortification (LSFF) for salt, wheat flour, cooking oil and other largely consumed foods and to accelerate programme gains related to LSFF in the region, as one of the cheapest strategies towards improved intakes of essential nutrients. UNICEF is convinced that enhancing and sustaining national LSFF programmes should be part of other nutrition efforts to prevent and control micronutrient deficiencies. It will particularly contribute to good nutrition for the general population, including women, school-aged children, and adolescents. The UN decade of Action on Nutrition and upcoming global Summits are unique opportunities to renew our commitment for LSFF.



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7 <https://globalnutritionreport.org/resources/nutrition-profiles/>

4 WHAT COULD BE THE KEY MESSAGES OR RECOMMENDATIONS TO AFRICAN COUNTRIES PROMOTE CONCRETE ACTIONS TO PREVENT MICRONUTRIENT DEFICIENCIES INCLUDING FOOD FORTIFICATION PROGRAMMES?

In addition to LSFF, tailored approaches are required to address the specific needs of the youngest who are less likely to meet their nutrient need through LSFF. While diets in the first two years of life have a lifelong impact on child survival and development, only one in five children aged six to 23 months⁸ are fed a minimum number of food groups⁹, and only one in ten receive a minimum acceptable diet in the region. These alarming figures confirm that the unique needs of young children are not sufficiently considered in efforts to improve diets and the systems that shape them, including food systems. UNICEF calls for, and is committed to, support deliberate policies and integrated programmes to improve young children's diets, including with a special attention to fortified complementary foods. Engaging with the private sector in a renewed public-private partnership will be essential to make locally-produced fortified complementary foods available and affordable in the region¹⁰. This critical action may not only contribute to improving young children diets, but also serve as an innovative entry point for community-led integrated approaches, including nutrition-sensitive agricultural production, women empowerment and income generation activities as well as social protection services, with other nutrition-specific and sensitive nutrition interventions, hence shaping community-led and multisectoral systems for brighter futures. Nutrition-sensitive and child-centred food systems are more than ever critical if we want to efficiently improve young children's diets - A must in the path to 2030.

5 WHAT HAVE BEEN THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE NUTRITION SITUATION IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA? WHAT ARE THE STRATEGIES AND KEY MEASURES THAT ARE NEEDED TO ADDRESS THE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF THE PANDEMIC ON THE NUTRITION OF THE MOST VULNERABLE ONES?

COVID-19 triggered a socio-economic crisis of unprecedented proportions, threatening to reverse the hard-earned development gains of the past decades¹¹. Prior to the pandemic, an estimated 12.9 million cases of acute malnutrition were projected in 2020 in the region, including 4.1 million of severe acute malnutrition. These figures are expected to increase to 13.9 and 4.3 million respectively in 2021, due to the pandemic and deteriorating food security situation in the Sahel¹². The dramatic scale of the disruption to child-centred social services was illustrated by the sharp drop in bi-annual Vitamin A supplementation, falling to 43 million in 2020 from 66 million in 2019, as well as the 8 per cent drop in new admissions for severe acute malnutrition. In the midst of this, many opportunities have emerged – for governments and communities to adapt their strategies to be 'COVID-proof' and ensure continued access to essential nutrition services for children and women; for the public sector to reconfirm long-term investments for the realization of child rights; and for investors to accelerate the recovery efforts for families and economies alike. The COVID-19 pandemic should be a catalyst for progress with a focus on local and sustainable solutions so that no child is left behind.

8 Base de données mondiale de l'UNICEF, 2020

9 Amélioration de l'alimentation du jeune enfant pendant la période d'alimentation complémentaire Guide de programmation New York: UNICEF, 2020. Un régime alimentaire diversifié comprend des repas composés d'aliments provenant d'une variété de groupes d'aliments chaque jour : (1) lait maternel; (2) grains, racines et tubercules; (3) légumineuses, noix et graines; (4) produits laitiers (lait, yaourt, fromage); (5) aliments carnés (viande, poisson, volaille et foie ou abats); (6) œufs; (7) fruits et légumes riches en vitamine A ; et (8) autres fruits et légumes. Pour atteindre la diversité alimentaire minimale, 5 des 8 groupes alimentaires sont nécessaires.

10 <https://www.iram-fr.org/ouverturepdf.php?file=ird-rapportunicef-web150-complet-1602769912.pdf>

11 [WCARO-Investment-Case-Overview-14Aug2020-Final.pdf](#) & [sub-saharan-africa-growing-crisis-world-opportunities](#)

12 Analyse d'impact conjointe de l'insécurité alimentaire et du COVID-19 UNICEF-PAM

6

COULD YOU SHARE WITH US A FEW EXAMPLES OF COUNTRY AND REGIONAL GOOD PRACTICES THAT HAVE THE POTENTIAL FOR BEING REPLICATED?

As we call for a stronger focus on improving young children's diets, we worked, together with partners, on the implementation of two promising regional initiatives, namely the Stronger with Breastmilk Only¹³ and the 1st Foods Initiatives. Those initiatives, while at early stages of implementation, have a strong potential to contribute to the scaling-up of actions to protect, promote and support breastfeeding as well as improve young children's diets. I strongly encourage the documentation and use of country and regional best practices and lessons learnt. We need to know what works or not. Knowledge generation, dissemination and use are critical to guide the implementation of cost-effective and context-specific approaches towards the scaling-up of essential nutrition interventions in the region and should be at the centre of our collective action.



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