



DRAFT COMMUNIQUE OF THE REGIONAL HIGH-LEVEL CONSULTATION ON FOOD FORTIFICATION

3 September 2021, Abidjan

We, the participants of the high-level consultation on food fortification, representatives from African countries, the African Union Commission, African regional organizations, UN organizations, development partners, civil society organizations, international financial institutions, the private sector, academia, as well as distinguished invitees, having deliberated during the last two days,

IN ALIGNMENT with the **agreement of all nations** to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, including to end all forms of malnutrition, by 2030; the World Health Assembly target of a 50% reduction of anaemia in women of reproductive age by 2025; Aspiration 1 of the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063; and in the spirit of AU's upcoming year of nutrition in 2022;

REAFFIRMING our **commitment** towards advancing fortification in Africa;

DEEPLY CONCERNED about the **persisting malnutrition nutrition situation** in Africa, where 51% of women of reproductive age (aged 15-49) and 69.9% of children aged 6-59 months in Western Africa are anemic, as well as the slow progress of many countries in the African subregion in meeting the targets for anaemia in women of reproductive age;

RECOGNIZING the game changing **benefits of food fortification** as a time-tested and cost-effective strategy to address micronutrient deficiencies, with ability to piggyback on existing distribution channels and initiatives and the potential to reach large numbers of people and improve nutrition without requiring significant behaviour change;

COMMENDING the **progress made so far** on the continent, including efforts to scale up biofortification, the 27 countries that have mandates to fortify wheat flour and the many countries that fortify cooking oil and salt as part of their comprehensive nutrition strategy, as well as the slow decline in anaemia;

COGNIZANT that food fortification, including biofortification, is **one approach to addressing micronutrient deficiencies**, complementary to supplementation and promotion of dietary diversity;

ACKNOWLEDGING the capacity of food fortification efforts to **strengthen broader food systems**, and the importance of functioning food systems to support fortification implementation;

REALISING the need for **greater partnerships and synergies to augment political commitment** such that African Union Member States take urgent and concrete actions;

OPTIMISTIC about the **rich human and natural resources** on the African continent which can support the scale up of food fortification;



1. Call upon the **African Union to formally spearhead and oversee efforts** to scale up food fortification in Africa, in collaboration with Member States, and in line with already existing continental policies, strategies and initiatives, and for Member State governments, institutions, development partners and private sector to step forward as champions of food fortification efforts in Africa;
2. Welcome the proposal to elevate **the Regional Centre of Excellence against Hunger and Malnutrition (CERFAM) to an AU specialized agency** on food and nutrition security, as per the request of the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire to the AU in order to facilitate i) regional harmonization of policies, legal frameworks and mechanisms on food fortification; ii) promote knowledge exchange platforms and networks to foster the dissemination and replication of good practices within the continent, and call on the African Union to fast-track this process.
3. Call on the African Union Member States and all partners in their various capacities and mandates, to **prioritize actions and investments** to where food fortification has the greatest potential to impact nutrition through the lifecycle: in school feeding and in the critical window of the first 1,000 days of life;
4. Request Member States to **create an enabling policy, legal and financial environment** for fortification efforts to thrive, including investing in capacity building of local producers so that fortification efforts foster rural transformation, and stimulating the front runners of good practices in the private sector;
5. Call on CERFAM, in collaboration with partners, to lead the **development of a clear action plan** with roles, responsibilities, accountability, timelines and a funding strategy by the end of 2021. This action plan should ensure that all partners drive the fortification agenda forward in a synergistic and sustainable way;
6. Urge for the intensification of **advocacy, partnership and knowledge sharing** at global, continental, regional and national level to accelerate food fortification, improve data collection and analysis, and sensitize stakeholders to benefits of food fortification. This should take advantage of upcoming platforms and events such as the African Union's Heads of State summit and year of nutrition in 2022.