

A Blueprint for the Design and Implementation of Large-Scale Food Fortification Programs



This **Fortification Blueprint** was developed through a collaboration between Nutrition International and the Food Fortification Initiative from January to June 2021.

Various partners and organizations working in fortification have created differing food fortification frameworks to guide program managers through the design, implementation, scale up, and monitoring of fortification programs. With these multiple frameworks available, it can be challenging for nations to determine optimal methods needed to design, implement, and sustain fortification programs, particularly following the cessation of external technical support. To this end, Nutrition International and the Food Fortification Initiative aimed to review existing frameworks and craft a novel approach as a means of operationalizing the review findings, with ideals derived from current frameworks. Based on strengths, weaknesses, innovative concepts, and gaps found in current frameworks and obtained from stakeholder discussions, the proposed Fortification Blueprint was drafted.

The Blueprint aims to provide a broad-spectrum guide for program managers (within governments and/or partner organizations) of large-scale, mandatory food fortification programs that considers learnings from a multitude of organizations and individuals, in addition to components known about current fortification programming shortcomings, such as the limited attention given to effective private sector business models, capacitating national academic institutions, and reassessing fortification program design.

The goal of a single, streamlined fortification framework, drawing on review findings, is multi-faceted. It intends to:

- a. Provide a comprehensive and actionable design guide for individuals and agencies supporting fortification programming.
- b. Better inform governments and partners about key elements for consideration at each stage of the fortification process, including elements needed for scaling and sustaining effective interventions.
- c. Harmonize the approach to key programming elements, such as regulatory monitoring and creation of fortification standards.
- d. Draw renewed attention to key programming elements often absent from fortification program design.
- e. Inform improved fortification policies and practices enabling the design of more efficient and sustainable programs that retain the ability to generate a robust and meaningful impact on target populations.

Further, the Blueprint intends to refresh program thinking and priorities and provide renewed guidance concerning program components required to scale fortification initiatives and achieve nutrition impact goals.

The Blueprint is organized into seven major programming actions, with each action further separated into specific components. Where relevant, the Blueprint provides existing tools and resources to enable the user to complete each action. Although the seven major programming actions are presented as a sequence of steps, it should be noted that several of the activities could occur simultaneously. The sequencing of the actions should be taken as a general guide and should not be interpreted as a requirement for countries to explicitly follow them as numbered.

For example, although countries will need to establish standards before the private sector begins fortification, a fortification strategy or policy does not necessarily have to be formally prepared before standards or legislation are finalized. Similarly, engaging and/or strengthening civil society or national laboratories can commence in the early stages of fortification implementation and does not have to wait until the formulation of policies or strategies.

The findings from the review and the proposed Fortification Blueprint intend to provide a call to action (and a means by which to operationalize this call to action) aimed at national and global-level policymakers, program implementers, and donor agencies around the need to take a renewed look at fortification program design. Due attention in the program design process is required to ensure the inclusion of innovative models and overlooked or undervalued programming components that break from status quo operations and aid in swift and feasible program adoption and maintenance.

A high-level overview of the Blueprint is on the following page. The detailed Blueprint, including relevant tools and resources on how to operationalize each action, will be published soon.

HIGH-LEVEL OVERVIEW

- 1. Justify: Identify Need and Feasibility with In-Country Stakeholders**
 - a. Identify need and relevance of fortification; assess fortification as part of an optimal mix of interventions
 - b. Demonstrate feasibility of fortification
 - c. Provide justification to government for fortification
- 2. Prime: Advocate and Engage**
 - a. Map fortification stakeholders
 - b. Build partnerships/alliances
 - c. Garner political will and government engagement
 - d. Support national budgetary inclusions
 - e. Conduct political, private, and civil sector advocacy
 - f. Engage and align national programs with global/regional efforts and guidance bodies
 - g. Identify fortification champions
- 3. Establish Guiding Structures: Enable Policy, Legislation, Standards, and Monitoring Guidelines**
 - a. Draft fortification policy
 - b. Draft fortification legislation
 - c. Establish fortification requirements included in food standards or food regulations
 - d. Identify/establish inspection, audit, and enforcement opportunities within existing food control system
- 4. Operationalize: Establish an Enabling Environment for Industry**
 - a. Provide industry scale-up and ensure strong QA/QC protocols (including quality premix and equipment)
 - b. Explore effective business models for food producers
 - c. Garner marketing support from government
- 5. Monitor: Enable Inspection, Audit, and Enforcement**
 - a. Establish and strengthen monitoring systems (including training inspectors on regulatory monitoring practices or an alternative means of assessing compliance)
 - b. Capacitate civil society to hold industry accountable
 - c. Strengthen laboratories
- 6. Assess: Establish Coverage and Nutritional Impact Assessment and Evaluation**
 - a. Support governments to integrate key indicators into ongoing surveys
 - b. Capacitate academic institutions
- 7. Reassess: Ensure Continued Program Harmonization and Optimization**
 - a. Review relevance and appropriateness of fortification standards and program design and make adjustments as necessary

CROSS-CUTTING THEME

Institutionalize: Ensure National Program Ownership

- a. Integrate fortification into existing nutrition plans and national systems
- b. Support the creation of academic curriculum on fortification
- c. Establish mechanisms that favour financial self-sustainability