

International Leaders Discuss Flour Fortification In India

New Delhi, February, 2011

Participants in separate meetings:

- Mihoko Tamamura, India Representative and Country Head, World Food Program (WFP)
- Dr. Shariqua Yunus, Program Officer, Health and Nutrition, WFP
- Melanie Galvin, Regional Director, Micronutrient Initiative (MI) Asia
- Mini Varghese, Program Manager, MI-India
- Dr. Rajan Sankar, Regional Representative, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) Asia
- Deepti Gulati, Senior Program Associate, GAIN, South Asia
- Scott Montgomery, Director of the Flour Fortification Initiative (FFI)
- Subrata Dutta, Coordinator of the India Flour Fortification Network (IFFN)

Mihoko explained how WFP-India is piloting new ideas, technologies and initiatives in food fortification. IFFN's involvement in wheat flour fortification has helped promote fortification in India. WFP and IFFN have been very closely working on several areas of flour fortification. WFP and IFFN jointly organized a national consultation meeting in December 2009. We are exploring new areas to work together on wheat flour fortification, Mihoko informed.

In a meeting with the Micronutrient Initiative, leaders discussed promotion of wheat flour fortification in various regions and countries. Scott stressed the need for mandatory flour



fortification in India citing the example of Philippines where mandatory fortification had helped the country move faster in flour fortification and reach a larger segment of the population with fortified products. Mandatory fortification was a debatable issue in India, and IFFN partners were divided on this issue, primarily because small chakki mills in rural areas would be difficult to monitor.

Melanie said MI's evaluation plan on wheat flour fortification programs will determine how fortified flour is actually reaching the populations. MI will work closely with IFFN on the evaluation plan.

With GAIN, Scott and Subrata discussed GAIN's support in implementation of wheat flour fortification program in Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. GAIN signed an agreement with the Roller Flour Millers Federation of India which would implement flour fortification program in two states.

Dr. Sankar noted that IFFN is a vibrant network which has involved all stakeholders in promotion of wheat flour fortification. India's policy is very conducive, and there is huge opportunity to implement this program, Dr. Sankar pointed out.

With a fragmented flour milling industry, India relies heavily on the industry for implementation of the fortification program. Other issues, like use of the recommended iron compound for high extraction flour, are still barriers for the flour fortification program. He stressed providing right exposure to the industry players. Such exposure to the champions from the milling industry and multi-nation companies would motivate them to start fortification of foods in India.

Dr. Sankar discussed the differences between rice and wheat flour fortification and noted that comparative analysis of different rice fortification technologies are needed.