

Joint Statement on the Power of Micronutrients at the 2021 Nutrition for Growth Summit

Improving diets with micronutrients: A powerful investment for people, planet and prosperity

November 2021

The 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit highlighted the commitment of world leaders and their nations to healthy diets for all people, everywhere. Access to healthy and nutritious food is foundational for life, good health and prosperity for all. The tens of thousands of people who participated in the Summit are committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Healthy diets are dense in micronutrients which have a critical role to play in achieving the 2030 Agenda. Populations with adequate micronutrient status can maintain good health and strong immunity, making them more resilient, productive and economically stronger. Micronutrients also protect children's physical growth and brain development, allowing them to thrive and learn.

However, an estimated two billion people worldwide suffer from micronutrient deficiencies due to the lack of a healthy and diverse diets. The effects of climate change and COVID-19 have made nutritious diets even less available and affordable.

Our ultimate goal is to end micronutrient deficiencies with all people having access to nutritious, safe, affordable, and sustainable diets that are micronutrient-rich and locally produced. We must strive for food systems that deliver the nutritious diets that all children need to reach their full growth and development potential. Such healthy diets start with breastfeeding and complementary foods as critical source of micronutrients for the first 2 years of age and beyond.

When access to affordable nutrient-rich diets is limited, increased investment in complementary, evidence-based, cost-effective interventions can accelerate progress towards ending micronutrient deficiencies. Such interventions include:

- **Food fortification**, which adds essential vitamins and minerals to widely consumed foods, including cereal flours, rice, cooking oil, salt and other condiments.
- **Biofortification**, which increases the micronutrient content of staple crops such as wheat, rice, beans and maize through crop breeding, while optimizing yield and climate resilience.
- **Supplementation**, with vitamin A, iron, folic acid and multiple micronutrient supplements, particularly during life stages when physiological needs are particularly high such as childhood and gestation.

These low-cost interventions are yielding significant impact. For example, the global campaign to eliminate iodine deficiency through salt iodization has protected hundreds of millions of children from mental impairment associated with iodine deficiency. Fortification of flour with folic acid protects against devastating birth defects. Supplementation with vitamin A saves children's lives, improving their chances of survival by as much as 25 per cent. And biofortified crops are improving the diets and livelihoods of an estimated 50 million people in smallholder farming families, in a sustainable and cost-effective way.

As partners in global efforts to eliminate malnutrition in all forms, we know that micronutrient security for all can be achieved. Proven cost-effective interventions exist that are immediately scalable. We need political will and additional investments to make them happen for all. *Ahead of the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit in December, we urge donors, governments, and private sector leaders to rapidly scale up micronutrient interventions, which offer an opportunity to transform food and health systems, save and improve lives and achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.*

We urge you to join us.

Sincerely,

Micronutrient Forum
GAIN
Harvest Plus
Iodine Global Network
UNICEF