

# New Initiative Will Harness Food Fortification to Fight Micronutrient Deficiencies among the World's Most Vulnerable

*The USAID AFFORD program will work with the private sector and others to improve nutrition, health, and economic growth by supporting food fortification*

DES MOINES, IOWA, UNITED STATES, October 21, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- This week, the U.S.



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*USAID Administrator  
Samantha Power*

Agency for International Development (USAID) administrator, Samantha Power, announced the launch of the [USAID Advancing Food Fortification Opportunities to Reinforce Diets](#) (USAID AFFORD) project. The \$75 million global program, part of the U.S. government's Feed the Future initiative, will take a holistic approach to promoting large-scale food fortification that puts businesses at the core of the solution while strategically engaging with the public, private, and civil society sectors. In addition to TechnoServe, which leads program implementation, the program partners include Nutrition International, the Food

Fortification Initiative, and ISF Advisors.

Diets lacking essential nutrients like vitamin A, iron, folic acid, zinc, and iodine present an important global health issue among the most economically and nutritionally vulnerable population groups, especially women and children. In [a study published by The Lancet Global Health](#), researchers estimated that 1.2 billion women of reproductive age globally have one or more micronutrient deficiencies, as do more than 372 million preschool-aged children, resulting in "...increased susceptibility to infections, birth defects, blindness, reduced growth, cognitive impairment, decreased school performance and work productivity, and even death." The WHO, for example, estimates that vitamin A deficiency causes blindness in up to 500,000 children annually.

The fortification of staple foods and condiments is a proven low-cost, high-impact intervention that addresses this "hidden hunger" and helps ensure that even the most vulnerable populations are able to consume a diet with the necessary vitamins and minerals; as a result, more than 140 countries currently mandate the fortification of one or more food vehicles. Despite these policies, however, compliance with fortification standards has remained very low in a number of

low- and middle-income countries.

USAID AFFORD will improve access to fortified foods by fostering collaboration and action among key stakeholders across the food system. It will draw on TechnoServe's methodologies for supporting food processors and building trust with the private sector, refined through use in projects, including the Feed the Future projects AINFP and SAFE, to address sector-wide challenges and opportunities and provide customized assistance to individual local food companies.

Core elements of the USAID AFFORD approach include:

- Placing the food industry at the center of the solution: To overcome fortification-related challenges, the program will foster trust and collaboration between food processors, governments, and other stakeholders. USAID AFFORD will work to ensure that food businesses receive the technical assistance, finance, and supportive ecosystem they need to integrate food fortification into their operations.

- Data-driven decision-making: USAID AFFORD will help provide timely, localized data that accurately informs governments and key stakeholders and enables appropriate policies and demand-driven technical assistance. Accurate data is also the evidence that empowers civil society to advocate for improved government monitoring and industry compliance.

- Convergence of innovations: By facilitating the improvement of monitoring tools, data visualization, training, monitoring-and-evaluation, and cross-sector accountability, AFFORD will help enable a response that cuts across sectors and disciplines and convenes key stakeholders around the design and implementation of solutions.

- Ecosystem approach: AFFORD will engage with the public, private, and civil society actors at national, regional, and global levels, expanding and sustaining interventions, mobilizing commitment, leadership, and investment, and fostering better collaboration to scale food fortification.

The global program has the potential to work with food businesses and other ecosystem actors in more than a dozen countries, improving access to fortified foods for millions of individuals, thanks to additional investment from USAID Missions.

"Food fortification can give families a kind of nutritional safety net, you might say, providing the essential nutrients that they need to survive. And it's incredibly cost-effective: iron fortification costs \$0.08 per child, iodine fortification of salt even less," said USAID Administrator Samantha Power, announcing the program at the Borlaug Dialogue in Des Moines, Iowa.

"With this funding, we will work with governments to set and enforce nutritional standards while also providing resources to expand and scale fortification across regions facing malnourishment," she continued.

“Adopting large-scale food fortification is key to improving the nutrition, health, and development of millions of people around the world, and food businesses are a vital part of making that work,” said William Warshauer, president and CEO of TechnoServe. “We are excited to partner with USAID, Nutrition International, the Food Fortification Initiative, and ISF Advisors to support processors and other stakeholders around the world to drive real, lasting change in the food system and improve lives.”

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## ABOUT USAID

The U.S. Agency for International Development administers the U.S. foreign assistance program providing economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 80 countries worldwide.

Feed the Future is the U.S. Government’s initiative to end global hunger. Led by USAID and driven by collaborative partnership across public and private sectors, including 11 U.S. Government agencies, Feed the Future addresses the root causes of poverty and hunger. We do this by boosting inclusive agriculture-led economic growth, resilience and nutrition in countries with great need and opportunity for improvement.

## ABOUT TECHNOSEERVE

Founded in 1968, TechnoServe is a leader in harnessing the power of the private sector to help people lift themselves out of poverty for good. A non-profit organization working in 30 countries, we work with people to build a better future through regenerative farms, businesses, and markets that increase incomes. Our vision is a sustainable world where all people in low-income communities have the opportunity to prosper.

More information at: Twitter: @TechnoServe | Facebook: @TechnoServe | LinkedIn: @TechnoServe

Nicholas Rosen  
TechnoServe  
media@tns.org

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