



THE NMG WHEAT EXPO 2023 29<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023

Theme: ‘Growing Wheat Sustainably for a Healthier and Wealthier Nation’

Celebrating millers’ commitment to food quality and nutrition security



BY DOMINIC SCHOFIELD

Kenya’s population is expected to reach 85 million by 2050, and ensuring that this growing population has access to safe, nutritious food is vital, especially in the midst of droughts, shortages, and increasing food prices.

Sustainable economic growth calls for investment in nutrition-sensitive interventions aimed at ensuring a healthy and productive population. Food processors play a critical role in delivering nutrition to consumers at scale, as the fortification of staple foods is one of the effective approaches to addressing malnutrition.

Food fortification confers many benefits to health, particularly prevention and reduction of micronutrient (vitamins and minerals) deficiencies. Some micronutrients added to flours and their benefits to the Kenyan consumers include the following:

A common drive for nutrition

Ensuring that every Kenyan has access to adequately fortified foods requires the cooperation of the public, private, and civil-society sectors. In 2012, the Government of Kenya mandated fortification of wheat flour, maize flour, and edible oil, with essential vitamins and minerals to improve their nutritional value and offer public health benefits. A decade later, notable progress has been recorded, with Cereal Millers Association (CMA) members playing an integral role.

In line with the Government of Kenya’s national agenda, TechnoServe – a non-profit organisation that leverages the power of business and markets to create sustainable pathways out of poverty – works with key stakeholders across food systems, including farmers, food processors, and retailers to advance strategic nutrition objectives and improve livelihoods.

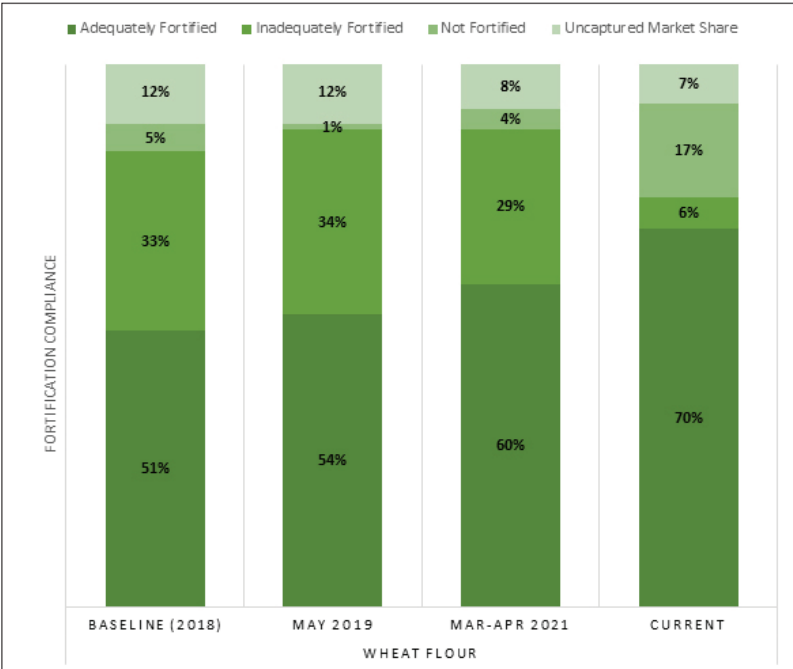
Since 2018, TechnoServe Kenya, with funding from Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), has been working closely with wheat and maize millers to increase coverage of fortified foods in the market, as well as compliance to food safety and fortification requirements.

The programme’s approach involves sector-wide trainings based on cross-cutting industry needs, tailored technical assistance provided to individual millers, technological support and product quality testing analysis



Left to right: Paloma Fernandes (CMA CEO), Mefthe Tadesse (Technoserve), Kamaldeep Singh Phull (Maisha Flour Mills), Suad Abubaker (Pembe Flour Mills), Mohamed Islam (Mombasa Maize Millers), Beju Shah (Spice World), Oosthuizen Anton (Unga Limited), Ms Rose Nyamu (Ministry of Agriculture), and Aditya Jagati (BMGF).

Micronutrients Added	Benefits
Iron	Strong immunity, improved learning abilities. Prevents anaemia, maternal deaths, infant deaths, faetal growth retardation and low infant birth weight.
Vitamin A	Protects from visual impairments and blindness.
Zinc	Contributes to strong immunity, fertility, metabolism, child growth and development, and heart health.
Folate/folic acid	Improved cognitive development, protect from brain and spinal cord defects (neural tube defects).



against standards requirements. Over the years, tremendous gains in fortification have been registered.

Increased coverage of fortified foods

Compliance data indicates improvement in the coverage of fortified food,

with wheat flour fortification compliance rising from 51 percent in 2018 to 70 percent in 2022. This demonstrates an increased reach of fortified wheat flour from 28 million to 39 million Kenyans. The notable progress is heavily attributed to efforts by CMA members, who have sustained their long-held

Supply of Adequately Fortified Wheat Flour



Went from reaching 28 million Kenyans to reaching

39 million Kenyans

commitment to “doing the right thing” to deliver safe and nutritious food to their consumers.

These numbers represent real-world impacts for individuals across the country. More children have improved learning abilities, more mothers have reduced risks of anemia, maternal and fetal mortalities, and more Kenyans have reduced episodes of illnesses, among many other gains.

A vision for the future

It is important that we build upon this success. TechnoServe is now implementing a large-scale food fortification programme – Inspiring Good Nutrition Initiatives Through Enterprise (IGNITE) – which also entails mobilising

industry partners under the Millers for Nutrition (M4N) initiative.

M4N is a global coalition of millers committed to food fortification, with knowledge-sharing and technical support being delivered through a growing portfolio of strategic fortification partners. In addition to receiving access to this technical assistance, high-performing millers will be celebrated through brand quality recognition, encouraging their sustained commitment to fortification by rewarding their role as industry champions.

In efforts to improve accountability and strengthen industry ownership of the fortification agenda, CMA and TechnoServe partnered in developing a self-regulatory platform: The Kenya Millers Fortification Index (KMFI).

The index is an industry-led mechanism and ranking platform that allows participating brands to assess their performance based on industry quality benchmarks that cut across key business functions. KMFI complements existing government regulation by ensuring commitment of the food processors to food safety and fortification excellence. It has been implemented as a pilot amongst five companies.

Earlier this month, Kenya marked an important milestone in its fortification efforts. The CMA and TechnoServe co-convened the 1st Annual Kenya Food Processing and Nutrition Leadership Forum on June 14. The forum was aimed at celebrating the industry achievements in food fortification, rallying stakeholders to make commitments towards alleviating malnutrition, and launch the KMFI, with CMA members committing to expanding the adoption of this initiative as a means of effectively reporting fortification efforts to a broader range of stakeholders.

The event brought together stakeholders from the CMA, Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS), Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Cooperatives, strategic fortification partners (DSM, BASF, Muehlenchemie, and SANKU), and representatives from the academia. It served as an opportunity to highlight existing and emerging challenges facing the industry, including supply chain disruptions and acknowledgment by the government for action.

The various stakeholders, including industry, government, and development partner representatives, made commitments to support the food fortification ecosystem through signing of the communiqué.

The commitments reflect members’ strong and collective resolve towards achieving adequate fortification of our major staples by 2024 and ensuring that Kenyans have access to the nutrition they need to lead healthy and productive lives.

Schofield is the Regional Programme Director – Inspiring Good Nutrition Initiatives Through Enterprise (IGNITE)