

# Media Update

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## WFP

Press Release

### PUNJAB FOOD FORTIFICATION STRATEGY AS A STEP TO IMPROVE NUTRITION IN PAKISTAN

**LAHORE** – The Punjab Food Department, the National Fortification Alliance (NFA) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) launched the Punjab Food Fortification Strategy 2018 today to address high rates of micronutrient deficiencies in Punjab, Pakistan’s largest province. This initiative was made possible by the generous contribution of the Australian government.

In Punjab, more than 39 percent of children under age five are stunted, 30 percent are underweight, and 14 percent are wasted, according to the National Nutrition Survey 2011. The survey also indicates a high rate of micronutrient deficiencies among children, including anaemia 60%; iron 49%; zinc 38%; vitamin A 51%; and vitamin D 67% -- numbers that are internationally categorized as at emergency levels.

“Australia is supporting efforts to improve nutrition in Pakistan. We have committed an additional AUD11 million to WFP to 2020 for nutrition and humanitarian activities, on top of AUD6 million previously committed. Our partnership with WFP takes a policy and evidence-driven approach to improving nutrition programs in Pakistan,” said Brek Batley, Deputy Head of Mission, Australian High Commission said.

Food fortification is an established and economical way to reduce micronutrient deficiencies. Fortifying staple foods such as wheat flour, edible oil, ghee and salt with micronutrients is one of the leading ways to overcome deficiencies and improve the nutritional status of a population.



The Government of Pakistan's Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation & Coordination (MNHSRC), the provincial governments and WFP are working together to reduce micronutrient deficiencies through the establishment of National and Provincial Fortification Alliances.

Food fortification efforts require strong collaboration between the public and private sectors as well as a regulatory environment where appropriate government legislation is enacted, allowing for the work of the Fortification Alliances to be effectively monitored and enforced.

Sardar Tanvir Ilyas, Minister of Planning and Development, Agriculture and Food, Government of the Punjab, and honourable chief guest, expressed appreciation for the efforts of all key stakeholders, reiterating that addressing the problem of malnutrition is and will remain at the top of the province's political agenda.

Shaukat Ali, Secretary of the Punjab Food Department, acknowledged the efforts and technical support of the key stakeholders in completing the strategy document. He also expressed gratitude to the Australian High Commission for its financial and technical support.

Dr. Baseer Achakzai, Secretary for the National Fortification Alliance, said that the strategy provides an outline for developing detailed plans to implement comprehensive fortification initiatives. He stated that staple foods must be fortified with key micronutrients for adequate health and proper growth of the population.

"There is a need to enhance availability and access to adequate and balanced diets which meet the nutrition requirement of all members of society with a special focus on the most vulnerable groups such as pregnant women and new mothers, children, adolescents, and the elderly," noted Katrien Ghoo, WFP Acting Country Director.

"We are grateful to the Australian Government for its strategic support in finalizing the national fortification strategy, including the establishment of fortification alliances in all the provinces, the successful tax exemption on premixed imports, the harmonization of wheat and oil fortification standards and the Punjab legislation on mandatory fortification, just to mention a few," Ghoo said.

The Pakistan National Fortification Strategy was launched in March 2017 by the NFA and MNHSRC with the support of WFP and the Australian Government. The objective of the strategy was to create a national framework for sustained wheat flour, oil/ghee and salt fortification programmes implemented by private and public sectors.

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