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## **Food Fortification: Regional Action Priorities for the Americas**

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### **Background**

For the most part, countries in the Americas are already fortifying with wheat flour, corn flour, or both. In addition, several countries are also producing and promoting the consumption of enriched foods targeted to specific population groups (pre-school and school children). This has been possible because of a series of favorable conditions: well-developed industry, available laboratory facilities, qualified personnel, urbanization accompanied by availability of processed foods, motivated industrial and health sectors, and appropriate legislation.

### **Objective**

To define the priorities for action in the Americas that ensure sustainable and effective food fortification programs to contribute to decreasing iron deficiency anemia.

### **Actions:**

While the conditions for successful iron fortification programs are at hand, specific problems still prevail. First, arbitrary criteria have often been adopted to select iron compounds. Second, fortification programs lack quality assurance systems, and countries have not implemented monitoring and surveillance systems. Third, legislation has not been adjusted in accordance with needed changes.

In light of these problems, we propose a set of actions to be implemented at the regional and country levels. These actions should be adjusted in each country taking into account the level of consumption of the food vehicle to be fortified, the type of iron compound to be used, climatic conditions, and technological capacity. In addition, legislation and regulations should be revised to ensure that fortified products will have an impact in decreasing iron deficiency anemia.

At the regional level, networks should be put into place for exchanging experiences related to the different stages of program implementation. In addition, training workshops should be implemented to standardize methodologies and procedures and to harmonize regulations taking into account the globalization of industrialized products. These networks should also be channels for promoting voluntary fortification of other food products.