



FAQR: FOOD AID QUALITY REVIEW PROJECT

Achievements and Impacts

The Food Aid Quality Review (FAQR) Project led by faculty at Tufts University Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy provides the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of Food for Peace (FFP) and its partners with actionable recommendations on ways food aid can make a significant impact.

ADDRESSING FOOD AID QUALITY

A team led by Tufts University has worked closely with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the U.S. Department of Defense's food research labs, to define how food aid products can be **optimally formulated to save lives** in emergencies and to promote healthy mothers and children in non-emergency contexts.

KEY FAQR ACHIEVEMENTS FROM 2009-2017:

1. Facilitated the reformulation and optimized 25 food aid products to industry standards.
2. Reformatted specifications for food aid products to meet commercial standards, reducing the time and costs borne by U.S. food suppliers for production.
3. Created Interagency Working Group which harmonized existing food aid products and optimized approaches to using novel food aid products or ingredients for nutrition.
4. Facilitated cross-agency interactions which streamlined federal response time, enhanced productivity, and quickly made decisions for food safety and quality assurance.
5. Developed the REFINE website, Research Engagement on Food Interventions for Nutritional Effectiveness, which tracks ongoing studies and identifies priority gaps in food aid research.

SUCCESSES: IMPACT THROUGH STREAMLINED FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

In 2011, an in-depth scientific review produced a set of 35 recommendations which supported the most significant changes to the U.S. food aid agenda for decades.¹ Science-based recommendations were quickly put into practice by USAID and its partners, including reformulating food products, developing tools to support more cost-effective programming, enhancing data and information flows across government partners, and promoting innovations in product packaging and delivery.

FAQR recommendations from 2011 have helped optimize the impact of U.S. Government food assistance work, thereby securing greater value-for-money for U.S. taxpayers.



Figure 1: [USAID Malawi Flickr/Grace Nachiola/U.S. Embassy](#)

FAR-REACHING & SUSTAINABLE IMPACTS:

1. Upgrading the basket of U.S. Government food aid products.

As of 2017, there are 32 food products available from the U.S. for food aid operations. Since 2011, the vitamin and mineral content of 21 of those products was upgraded based on new science, two new food products were adopted for use, and the micronutrient premix specifications were redesigned to better achieve nutrition targets. FAQR's promotion of a focus on nutrition, not just on "food," has facilitated improved all-of-government coordination around enhancing all food aid products to achieve nutritional goals.



- Food Aid Products Updated
- New Food Aid Products Adopted for Use
- Micronutrient Premixes Upgraded

2. Designing commercial-standard food product specifications.



Government agencies define what foods are needed to respond to emergencies or promote healthy outcomes around the world. However, it is the U.S. food industry and shippers who produce and transport food-aid products to remote locations around the world. Working closely with commercial stakeholders of all kinds, FAQR has supported USAID and USDA to redesign specifications to meet commercial standards. This has reduced the time and cost borne by

U.S. firms bidding to produce and move such items.

3. U.S. leadership in global coordination of food aid activities.

Translating best practice into operational practice in the field was impaired for many years by confusion around seemingly similar food products produced by different countries and programmed by various agencies. FAQR supported interagency dialogue and agreement on standardized specifications for key products. This was achieved by the creation of a global interagency working group comprised of USAID, World Food Programme, UNICEF and Doctors Without Borders, with consultation from stakeholders such as the World Health Organization (WHO). FAQR supported greater transparency and harmonization around new food aid products by establishing common procedures which will last beyond the life of the FAQR.



4. Solution-focused technical working groups and communities of practice.



Until recently, there was little U.S. cross-agency interaction on many technical food aid issues. Today, several agencies interact to solve common problems in food safety, quality assurance and programming. This streamlines federal response time, enhances productivity and ensures timely decisions when lives are on the line.

5. Big data supporting best practices.

The U.S. Government's promotion of open access to and use of evidence-based best practices requires rigorous data on food aid costs and benefits. To achieve efficiencies by promoting evidence-based decisions, FAQR established the world's first online portal for tracking and reporting on food aid research. REFINEnutrition.org (Research Engagement on Food Interventions for Nutritional Effectiveness) is a knowledge-sharing mechanism which disseminates emerging evidence relevant to food assistance.



Figure 2: The REFINEnutrition Website Homepage

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¹ Webb, P., B. Rogers, I. Rosenberg, N. Schlossman, C. Wanke, J. Bagriansky, K. Sadler, Q. Johnson, J. Tilahun, A. Reese Masterson, A. Narayan. 2011. *Delivering Improved Nutrition: Recommendations for Changes to U.S. Food Aid Products and Programs*. Boston, MA: Tufts University.