

## Inter-Agency Working Group for Specialized Nutritious Food Products 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting Communique Monday, June 12- Tuesday, 13, 2017 Copenhagen, Denmark

### Introduction to Inter-Agency Working Group

The overarching goal of the International Inter-Agency Group for Specialized Nutritious Food Products (SNFPs) is to **promote appropriate formulations, modifications, and use of specialized nutrition food** products in a manner that **complies with international standards** and is **consistent with guidance from normative bodies on nutritional value and food safety**, also **taking into account advances in science**, including product related research and development, **operational needs of agencies**, and **empirical understanding of costs and effectiveness**<sup>1</sup>.

### Key Topics Discussed

The key topics discussed during the 10<sup>th</sup> Inter-Agency meeting (held June 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at the UNICEF Supply Division, Copenhagen, Denmark) were a review of accomplishments since the June 2016 meeting; updates on the harmonized ready-to-use food specifications; recent Codex and World Health Organization (WHO) activities relevant to specialized nutritious food products; how the inter-agency group can work with normative bodies on key action items moving forward; a process of considering new member organizations to the inter-agency working group; food safety and quality including shelf life, joint inspection and auditing; and updates on current and ongoing research and emerging topics of interest to the group including reducing added sugars in SNFPs, understanding factors to promote linear growth, and alternative products/ingredients including acceptability studies and measuring bioavailability.

### Attending Organizations

- United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
- World Food Programme (WFP)
- United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)
- Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)
- Tufts University Food Aid Quality Review (FAQR) acting as Secretariat
- World Health Organization (WHO)—attended as an observer on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2017



Image 1: Ready to Use Supplementary Food (RUSF) distribution, Borno (Nigeria). Credit—UNICEF Nederland, 2017

Below is a summary of the meetings proceedings highlighting points of agreement, areas where ongoing discussion is needed and priority areas for the next year, organized by priority workstreams as defined by the Inter-Agency Working Group.

<sup>1</sup> Inter-Agency Working Group for Specialized Nutritious Food Products Terms of Reference, October 2016

## Priority Workstreams Defined by the Inter-Agency Working Group

### Workstream 1: Harmonization of inter-agency approaches to defining specifications for SNFPs

- Harmonized procurement specifications
- Program input

### Workstream 2: Harmonization of approach to suppliers' approval process including product evaluation and auditing

- Product evaluation
- Auditing
- Supplier approval process

### Workstream 3: Addressing product quality concerns and harmonized response to adverse food safety events

- Food Quality Assurance
- Crisis management

### Workstream 4: Local capacity development on SNFPs

- Local Regional Procurement

### Workstream 5: Inter-Agency Working Group Communications

- Liaising with normative bodies: Codex, WHO
- Consultations on programmatic issues/suggestions

### Workstream 6: Research

- Identify research areas of interest

## Points of Agreement

### Workstream 1: Harmonization of inter-agency approaches to defining specifications for SNFPs

- Identified areas for **increased inter-agency coordination related to program technical guidance**: Gathering feedback from the field on use of food aid products, links between SNFP supply chain and program guidance
- The inter-agency working group should **adopt a joint approach to evaluating new formulations for SNFPs** (e.g.: alternative ingredients).
- Joint work on **high energy biscuit (HEB) reformulation**, lead by WFP and USAID
- Joint work to **refine micronutrient powder (MNP) specifications**, lead by UNICEF and WFP
- Continue joint work on **updating or revising specifications for SNFPs of interest** to inter-agency members

### Workstream 2: Harmonization of approach to suppliers' approval process including product evaluation and auditing

- Continue to coordinate a **small working group focused on food safety**:
  - Need for a define process for **product stability and process capability assessment**
  - **Audit of SNFP suppliers** (corrective and preventive action (CAPA) follow up, planning of next audits)
  - Share **information about non-conformities** of SNFP suppliers
  - **Harmonize response to adverse food safety events** with common response to SNFP suppliers
- Consider **harmonizing stability study guidance for Ready-to-Use Foods (RUFs)** between all agencies

### Workstream 3: Addressing product quality concerns and harmonized response to adverse food safety events

- **Consolidate agency data on Certificates of Analysis (COAs)** for RUFs and the harmonized premix
- Harmonize the **approach for addressing COA results with suppliers**

### Workstream 4: Local capacity development on SNFPs

- Continue to focus on **building local capacity for SNFP suppliers**

### Workstream 5: Inter-Agency Working Group Communications

- **Action items for discussion with normative bodies**:
  1. Clarification on WHO guidance related to 10% added free sugar
  2. Specific Nutrition Guidance
  3. Food Safety—guidance on contaminants.
  4. Protein quality
  5. Reformulation and alternative ingredients – what evidence is needed?

- Decision for accepting of new member organizations to the inter-agency working group will be made by reviewing new organization applications and by a consensus vote—the working group will **finalize the process for considering new member organizations and application template for new members** by July 2017.
- Approved **communications strategy for the Inter-Agency working group** to include:
  - Producing a 2-page communique after each meeting to be proactively shared publically through a variety of forums and internally within agencies
  - Each agency will seek approval for a common Inter-Agency website to be hosted on the FAQR site ([www.foodaidquality.org](http://www.foodaidquality.org))
  - Joint communications will be issued on behalf of concerned agencies when there are updates to product specifications, monographs etc. for SNFPs

### Workstream 6: Research

- Defined **new areas of research of interest** to the inter-agency group

#### Research on SNFPs

- Genetically modified organism (GMO) restrictions
  - Better understand impact of GMO restrictions on SNFPs, how to program food aid where GMO restrictions limit use of products
- Assessing bioavailability of micronutrients in SNFP product matrix
- Assessing aflatoxin and other contaminants levels such as DON in SNFP and in staple crops that are used as key ingredients in SNFPs, to fix/update specifications for aflatoxins and other contaminants in SNFP
- Stability studies and process capability assessment
- Packaging studies

#### Research on the context in which SNFPs should be programmed

- Relapse—causes of relapse, rates of relapse, prevention of relapse, relapse as a potential consequence to changes in SNFP programming
- Factors influencing wasting
- Studies that are designed to look at incidence rather than prevalence (longitudinal data)
- Evaluate how to integrate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and social behaviour change communication (SBCC) into SNFP programming
- Understanding adherence to food aid ration—sharing and selling
- Seasonality influences on programming
- Supplementation of pregnant and lactating women (PLWs)—targets for that beneficiary population
- Dosage throughout treatment phase
- Replication of approaches
- Impact of parasites—gut microbiome—on nutrition outcomes and growth
- Other measures of growth—body composition, cognitive function



Image 2: Measuring for malnutrition, Bangladesh 2014. Credit—USAID/FFP Flickr, Save the Children

## Points Raised for Ongoing Discussion/Consideration

### Workstream I: Harmonization of inter-agency approaches to defining specifications for SNFPs

- **New formulations** for SNFPs (e.g.: alternative ingredients)

- Define the **evidence and research methodology** needed for new formulations with alternative ingredients
- Determine what **communication is needed to suppliers regarding new formulations** with alternative ingredients
- Discussion of **technical guidance for programming of new formulations** with alternative ingredients
- Review of **updated Super Cereal Plus (SC+) with amylase specification**
- **Standardize labeling** for RUFs
- **Packaging improvements** for SNFPs

#### Workstream 2: Harmonization of approach to suppliers' approval process including product evaluation and auditing

- Ongoing discussion for more **focus on process monitoring and hazard analysis and critical control points (HACCP) for quality audits** for SNFP suppliers

#### Workstream 4: Local capacity development on SNFPs

- **Capacity of local suppliers** (and cost)

#### Workstream 5: Inter-Agency Working Group Communications

- **Regulatory classification of Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF)** as a Food for Special Medical Purposes (FSMP) through **Codex** and other normative bodies
- **Liaise with WHO on evolving guidance to reduce sugar in food aid formulas**, and discuss implications for products and programming
- **Codex Guidelines**
  - WHO joint statement—ensuring nutrient levels reflective of what is laid out in Codex Guidelines for RUTF

#### Workstream 6: Research

- **Protein quality requirements for SNFPs** (review WHO and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) guideline, evidence on protein quality)

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## Priority Areas for Inter-Agency Work in the Next Year (with lead agencies indicated)

#### Workstream 1: Harmonization of inter-agency approaches to defining specifications for SNFPs

- Expanded update on improved RUFs and harmonized premix (Q4, 2017) (WFP)
- Report on the HEB 2.0 (Q1, 2018) (USAID & WFP)
- Update on SC+ specification (Q4, 2017) (USAID & WFP)
- Working group on MNP specification harmonization (TBD) (UNICEF & WFP)

#### Workstream 3: Addressing product quality concerns and harmonized response to adverse food safety events

- Organize quality control and auditing meeting (Q4, 2017) (MSF)

#### Workstream 5: Inter-Agency Working Group Communications

- United States Pharmacopeia (USP) MNP Monograph Draft-review during public comment period (Q3, 2017)-UNICEF
- Codex Guideline for RUTF—provide agency positions prior to next Codex meeting (Q3, 2017)-UNICEF
- Comments on WHO Joint Statement for management of acute malnutrition— (Q3, 2017) (UNICEF & WFP)
- Criteria for new members to inter-agency working group and application (Q3, 2017) (Secretariat)
- Communications (Secretariat):
  - Seek approvals by all agencies for Inter-Agency Website (Q4, 2017)



Image 3: United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) distribution of HEBS, 2008. Credit—UN Photo (Flickr)/Logan Abassi

- Sharing of communique (internal and external) (Q3, 2017)

#### Workstream 6: Research

- Define the evidence and research methodology needed for new formulations and alternative ingredients for SNFPs (TBD) (Secretariat)
- Review of research on protein quality (TBD) (Secretariat)

#### Plans for Next Meeting

Date: June 2018

Location: Hosted by MSF, Brussels, Belgium

If you have questions regarding the communique or the Inter-Agency Working Group for Specialized Nutritious Food Products please contact the Secretariat at [foodaid4nutrition@gmail.com](mailto:foodaid4nutrition@gmail.com) or the below agency contacts.

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