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**Inter-Agency Working Group for Specialized Nutritious Food Products  
11<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting Communiqué  
Monday, September 10<sup>th</sup>-Tuesday, September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
Brussels, Belgium**

**Goal of the 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. (Inter-Agency Working Group for Specialized Nutritious Food Products Terms of Reference, October 2016)

*The purpose of this document is to share the main topics discussed, points of agreement, and future priority actions that resulted from the 11<sup>th</sup> Inter-Agency Working Group for Specialized Nutritious Food Products. (held September 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) Office, Brussels, Belgium)*

**Key Topics Discussed**

The key topics discussed during the meeting were: (a) Accomplishments since the June 2017 meeting; (b) updates on the harmonized ready-to-use food (RUF) specifications; (c) new formulations of “next generation” RUFs; (d) updates on recent Codex and World Health Organization (WHO) activities relevant to specialized nutritious food products; (e) applications for two new member organizations to the inter-agency working group; (f) programming considerations and research related to SNFPs; (g) food safety and quality including storage and transport practices, joint inspection and auditing; (h) drafting of inter-agency talking points related to inclusion of SNFPs on the essential medicines list (EML).

**Major Outcomes**

- Accepted International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Action Against Hunger (ACF) as new members of the Inter-Agency Working Group.
- Agreed to no longer pursue a harmonized premix across all LNS products due to the inability to use the same premix in SQ LNS that is used in larger LNS products due to organoleptic changes it causes.
- Identified a need for Inter-Agency alignment on recommendations on the level and type of evidence needed for adaptations to current SNFs and new SNF formulations.
- Prioritized the need for continued harmonization regarding packaging and moving toward 1) improved integrity, 2) exploring sizing/demarcation etc. that corresponds with programming protocols, practices, and operational needs 3) reducing environmental impact
- Shared specifications for High-Energy Biscuits 2.0, for harmonization.
- Identified the need for harmonized dosing and ration guidance documents for SNFPs.
- Recognized the need to define a system for feedback from on field incidents and challenges to the Inter-Agency Working Group and for the Working Group to communicate back down to field that is aligned with the work of other global groups and platforms engaged in nutrition and humanitarian response.

	Priority Areas for Inter-Agency Work in the Next Year	Points for Ongoing Discussion/Consideration
<p><b>Workstream 1: Harmonization of Inter-Agency Approaches to Defining Specifications for SNFPS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold small working group meetings on sufficient evidence to approve changes to product formulations or new products <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ USAID will share the process used with fortified rice to inform discussion</li> <li>○ Review the protocol used by WFP's New Foods Committee</li> </ul> </li> <li>• ICRC will share Acceptance Quality Limits (AQLs) regarding RUTF and RUSF</li> <li>• Develop simple harmonized product sheet for field programmers to use as reference <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ WFP will share their product sheet and interim substitution guidelines</li> <li>○ Review, compare, and provide feedback on the product sheet and substitution guidelines</li> <li>○ Determine the best platform for sharing this document</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is “sufficient evidence” for approving changes to product formulations or inclusion of new products in the food basket? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ This should include definition of target group and definition of programmatic use</li> <li>○ Based on the target group and programmatic use the need for evidence might differ</li> <li>○ A clear definition of acceptability study and efficiency study should be developed as well as what constitutes an acceptable protocol for acceptability study and for efficiency study</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Identify strategies to determine how the products are used in the field and in different contexts to ensure fit for purpose</li> <li>• Protocol for exchanging SNFP-related documents in the field as part of process for donating SNFPs</li> <li>• Packaging: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Strategies for labeling new formulations</li> <li>○ Pictograms on labels</li> <li>○ Harmonized approach to allergen labeling following supplier/allergen risk assessment</li> <li>○ LNS Packaging demarcation and sizes (Mapping exercise to understand packaging size ranges to meet field needs)</li> <li>○ Packaging innovations keeping in mind the environmental impact of packaging</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Harmonized product reference sheet for field programmers</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Workstream 2: Operations (Programming and Protocols) and Research</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a system for receiving feedback from field on incidents and challenges to the Inter-Agency Working group and communicating solutions back to the field <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Define issues that would be brought to this working group and stakeholders to be involved</li> <li>○ Develop the roadmap from problem definition, solution and communications back to implementation solution, document the recent HEB process for informing the roadmap</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Summarize updated evidence regarding dosing</li> <li>• Continue to discuss programming for pregnant and lactating women (PLWs)</li> <li>• Share Inter-Agency working group activities at the No Wasted Lives (NWL) meeting on November 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Define an agenda for future interactions with NWL and determine what activities fall within the mandate of the Inter-Agency Working Group compared to NWL</li> </ul> </li> <li>• WFP to share a brochure regarding nutrition research priorities to gauge interest among other inter-agency members</li> <li>• Facilitate discussion on research priorities as needed, aggregate information on emerging research priorities</li> <li>• Continue to discuss waste management of SNFP packaging as a programming priority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HEB 2.0 protocol for use and use of HEB versus Emergency Ration</li> <li>• Strategies to ensure changes to SNFPs address problems being reported from the field <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ This may include developing pre-requisites for field testing new formulas and developing a standardized methodology</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Collecting experiences on programming for PLWs</li> <li>• No Wasted Lives research priorities and synergies with the Inter-Agency group</li> <li>• Share results of a number of ongoing studies that will provide more information on the optimal dosing requirements for the most effective and cost-effective options for treating acute malnutrition.</li> <li>• Share results from ongoing studies on the effectiveness of “combined/integrated” protocols for addressing SAM and MAM using one product at different doses and MUAC measurement for enter and discharge</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Workstream 3: Harmonized Processes and Protocols for SNFP Supply Chain and Quality Assurance</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the Inter-Agency protocol for LNS suppliers regarding the salmonella testing approach and share with Inter-Agency members</li> <li>• Exchange information on RUTF micronutrient content given storage conditions, this may include feedback from the field and implementing temperature recording to gather data</li> <li>• Continue small working group meetings for auditors to review audit outcomes and non-conformities</li> <li>• Continue joint supplier audits and CAPA and plan future audits</li> <li>• Auditor from new members (ACF -ICRC) will join audits as observers first, and then perform audits and share findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requirements for manufacturing – RUTF and LNS products in a facility dedicated to low moisture foods and following the Codex standards for low moisture food</li> <li>• Share transportation and storage protocols and studies performed to have a harmonized recommendation on best practices, including a storage assessment checklist</li> <li>• Compilation of data collected on the effect of storage and transport on micronutrient content of RUTF</li> <li>• Reviewing trends related to pipeline breaks and discussion of shared strategies to improve supply chain efficiency</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Workstream 4: Addressing Product Quality Concerns and Harmonized Response to Adverse Food Safety Events</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• USAID to share process capability checklists and tools</li> <li>• Support USAID in planning an early 2019 workshop for SNFP stakeholders, including an invitation to all suppliers for RUFs, to discuss upgrades to prevention focused quality system <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Focus on joint approach to suppliers related to formulation (micronutrient compliance), packaging, weight, labeling etc.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Share topline results and trend analysis of RUTF nutrient content for evaluation of non-compliance and borderline suppliers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared communication with suppliers regarding expectations about reaching the midpoint or higher for nutrient specific specification ranges</li> <li>• Discussion of process capability for food safety and quality assurance</li> <li>• Defining specifications for nutritional products which should indicate target values for the nutritional parameters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Defining acceptable quality levels (AQL)</li> <li>○ Validating Certificate of Analysis (COA) based on acceptable quality levels (AQL)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Workstream 5: Inter-Agency Working Group Communications</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing a process for how the Inter-Agency Working group 1) identifies SNFP problems 2) solves these problems and 3) disseminates solutions to operational teams</li> <li>• Interaction with normative bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Tracking status of Systematic Reviews commissioned by WHO</li> <li>○ Essential Medicine List (EML)</li> <li>○ Codex</li> <li>○ WHO attendance at Inter-Agency meeting</li> </ul> </li> <li>• External website for Inter-Agency working group and/or system for gathering and cataloguing information from the field in systematic manner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing a process for how the Inter-Agency Working group 1) identifies SNFP problems 2) solves these problems and 3) disseminates solutions to operational teams</li> <li>• Interaction with normative bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Tracking status of Systematic Reviews commissioned by WHO</li> <li>○ Essential Medicine List (EML)</li> <li>○ Codex</li> <li>○ WHO attendance at Inter-Agency meeting</li> </ul> </li> <li>• External website for Inter-Agency working group and/or system for gathering and cataloguing information from the field in systematic manner</li> </ul>

## Attending Organizations

- United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
- World Food Programme (WFP)
- United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)
- Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)
- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
- Action Against Hunger (ACF)
- Tufts University Food Aid Quality Review (FAQR) acting as Secretariat
- World Health Organization (WHO)—attended remotely on September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018

## List of Documents to be Circulated: All documents are available [here](#).

- Published Systematic Reviews (2) from WHO on LNS products
- WFP Interim Guidance on Product Substitution
- No Wasted Lives Research Priorities
- REFINE Resource Review on Programming
- WFP Operations Research Strategy for Nutrition (22 February 2017)—3 documents
- SNF Ration Guidance Summary: November 2018

## Plans for Next Meeting

Date: June 2019

Location: Hosted by ICRC, Geneva, Switzerland

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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