

REPUBLIC OF RWANDA

Kigali, on

N°20.0003.../MIN/2012



MINISTRY OF HEALTH
P.O. BOX 84 KIGALI
www.moh.gov.rw

Right Honorable Prime Minister
KIGALI

Right Honorable,

RE: Purchasing Fortified Foods

Malnutrition, including micronutrient deficiency is an underlying factor of many deaths in Rwanda because it reduces the individual's ability to fight infections and diseases like malaria and HIV/AIDS. In addition, poor nutrition prevents individuals from reaching their full potential by limiting the capacity of children to thrive, students to learn, and employees to work thereby constraining the economic development of Rwanda. Anemia, which is a common manifestation of iron deficiency, is an important cause of maternal mortality and morbidity, low-birth weight among newborns and reduced attention and scholastic achievements for school children. Anemia is widespread in Rwanda and affects 38% of children under 5 years of age (RDHS 2010). It is also fairly high (17%) in women of reproductive age. The high anemia prevalence is attributable to diets that are based on cereals and tubers which are poor sources of iron as well as of low bioavailability.

Besides its role in the prevention and treatment of night blindness, Vitamin A reduces susceptibility to the severity of infectious diseases. Consequently, Vitamin A improves child survival with 93% of children aged 6-59 months receiving vitamin A supplementation in Rwanda. Iodine is also an important micronutrient for mental development. Lack of iodine is known to cause goiter and cretinism and is associated with infertility, spontaneous abortion, premature birth, stillbirth, and increased child mortality. Inadequate amount of iodine in the diet is therefore related to serious health risks for young children.

The Government of Rwanda has committed to addressing malnutrition and micronutrients deficiencies in particular, as part of Vision 2020 and towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. This commitment is evident by the various interventions currently being implemented to improve nutrition at the community level beginning with the development of a national multi-sectoral nutrition strategy. One of the key interventions in the strategy is Food Fortification, which consists adding the necessary micronutrients in the staple foods consumed in Rwanda. Rwanda continues to make steady progress around the design and implementation of a national food fortification program. The last step for national implementation is the ratification of the national fortification decree that is waiting promulgation of FDA which will happen in 2013.

It is in this regard that we kindly inform you of the current availability of these RBS approved fortified flours on the market (cooking oil and sugar will be fortified in the near future) that bears an approved RBS logo on the packaging. We further recommend that government and all other agencies purchase these fortified products. This will ensure optimal health for Rwandan population and the target groups (i.e. schools, health care centers, prisons, military barracks, and others) that are served by government and non-governmental agencies.

Sincerely,



Dr Agnes BINAGWAHO
Minister of Health

CC:

- His Excellency the President of the Republic of Rwanda
 - Honorable Minister of Education
 - Honorable Minister of Local Government
- KIGALI**