



## IMPROVING FOOD SECURITY, NUTRITION AND HEALTH OF VULNERABLE WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN THE GAMBIA

The Gambia is classified as a low-income-food-deficit country. Seventy-one per cent of the population live below the USD 2 per day poverty line and in 2014 the country was ranked 172 of 187 in the United Nations Human Development Index. Food insecurity and malnutrition are also high. The 2013 National Demographic Household Survey found that two-thirds of children under five, one-third of pregnant women, and 16 percent of lactating mothers had vitamin A deficiency. Despite significant advances in the reduction of undernutrition, the Gambia is still affected by micronutrient deficiencies. Fortification is the addition of one or more micronutrients to a staple food to correct, prevent or reduce micronutrient deficiencies; while biofortification is the process of enhancing the nutritional value of crops by increasing the density of vitamins and minerals in a crop through either conventional plant breeding, agronomic practices or biotechnology. Regulations for food fortification existed only for iodized salt in the country, and while there were programmes providing some supplements, they were clearly insufficient. Against this background, the European Union-funded project aimed to assist the Government to improve the food and nutrition security of vulnerable women and children in targeted regions, by focusing on ensuring access to and the consumption of micronutrient-rich foods and industrially fortified and biofortified foods.



### WHAT DID THE PROJECT DO?

The project contributed to reinforcing regulatory systems and public-private partnerships on food fortification in the Gambia. The National Alliance for Food Fortification (NAFF) was established to create an enabling environment and sustainable food fortification system. Fortification standards for selected foods were formulated and gazetted; and the Food Fortification Regulations 2020 were articulated and launched. The monitoring and surveillance of fortified foods was significantly improved through the establishment of monitoring and surveillance systems for food fortification. Activities to increase the production of fortified foods and biofortified crops included training farmers on good agricultural practices for the production of biofortified crops, as part of a mixed farming system that included short-cycle livestock and the regular use of fortified foods. A rapid primary multiplication site was also established for the production of clean and disease-free orange-fleshed sweet potato (OFSP) planting material, and certified vine multipliers were trained on the production of certified OFSP vines, producing significant results. Overall, 20 000 beneficiaries were reached with biofortified crops during the project. The consumption of fortified food, biofortified and diversified foods was promoted through an awareness-raising campaign and training on nutrition and the importance of fortified foods, through different communication channels.

### KEY FACTS

**Latest Approved Budget**  
USD 5 151 132

**Duration**  
March 2017-August 2022

**Resource Partner**  
The European Union

**Beneficiaries**  
National Nutrition Agency (NaNA),  
Ministry of Agriculture (MoA),  
National Agriculture Research  
Institute (NARI), Food Safety and  
Quality Authority (FSQA); and  
vulnerable women and children  
in the Gambia

# IMPACT

The project contributed to developing a conducive regulation and legislation environment for food fortification in the Gambia, as well as to increasing the production of fortified foods and biofortified crops. This, in turn, will contribute to enhancing food and nutrition security of vulnerable women and children in the targeted regions, and to increasing productivity, generating income and improving livelihoods.

# ACTIVITIES

- The Gambia Standards Bureau supported to formulate fortification standards for wheat flour, fortified rice, iodized salt, and fortified edible oils and fat.
- FORTIMAS: Fortification Monitoring and Surveillance system established, and workshop conducted, targeting monitoring and evaluation personnel.
- Capacities of 34 staff members of Food Safety and Quality Authority and Ministry of Health strengthened on fortification quality controls, as part of food fortification regulation enforcement.
- Network of 19 certified Provitamin A (PVA) maize seed producers established and trained, 17 of whom produced over 21 330 certified vines.
- 17 community poultry farms supported with layer and broiler schemes, 15 received 500 layer birds, and two poultry schemes received 2 500 broiler birds respectively.
- Training sessions organized on social behaviour change communication tools developed, reaching 1 375 beneficiaries.
- Recipes produced from biofortified crops, and cooking demonstrations conducted in project regions, targeting farmers, women of reproductive age, school cooks, and food processors.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

## Partners

Directorate of Health Promotion and Education (DHPE); Department of Agriculture (DoA); Food Safety and Quality Authority of The Gambia (FSQA); Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS); National Nutrition Agency (NaNA); National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI); National Seed Secretariat (NSS); United Nations (UN) System

## Project Title

Improving Food Security and Nutrition in The Gambia through Food Fortification

## Project Code

FAO: GCP/GAM/038/EC  
Donor: FOOD/2016/380-042

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