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Date: September 2, 2021

U.S. Agency for International Development
C/O Kelsey Ryan

RE: Request for Information No.: 7200AA21R00078 USAID/RFS Scaling Up Fortification activity
Submitted via email: foodfortification@usaid.gov

The Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) appreciates the opportunity to provide input on USAID/RFS Request for Information (RFI) related to Scaling Up Fortification activity. IFT is a global organization of approximately 12,000 individual members, in 95 countries, who are committed to advancing the science of food. Since 1939, IFT has engaged experts in food science, technology, and related professions from academia, government, and industry to solve many of the world's greatest food challenges. IFT provides scientific, technical, and career development resources for advancing the science of food and its application across the global food and agricultural systems. We believe that science is essential to ensuring that our global food system is sustainable, safe, nutritious, and accessible to all. For more information visit www.ift.org.

IFT strongly believes that research in and application of food science and technology is critical in advancing USAID's vision and mission to achieve and maintain adequate intake of key micronutrients in vulnerable population across countries through large-scale food fortification (LSFF), where regular consumption of a diverse diet is not sufficient to meet nutrient requirements. IFT supports the Intermediate Result (IR) activities outlined in LSFF Results Framework. IFT's comments are responsive to the following:

Question 1: How can a USAID LSFF activity most effectively garner greater commitment and support for LSFF from government, industry, and civil society?

IFT believes that successful implementation of LSFF programs requires collaboration and partnerships amongst various stakeholders – government, food industry, including ingredient suppliers, and the civil society at a country/regional level to evaluate/assess the needs of the country/region, production, and implementation capacity (e.g., production and scaling of food products and distribution), and impact of regulations and policies that may accelerate or impede the implementation of LSFF. Further, continuous monitoring and evaluation is important to determine effectiveness and benefits to human health of the LSFF programs. Additionally, effective communication about the benefits of consuming fortified food products and processes and technologies used to develop the product is important, to alleviate/address concerns related to food processing and processed foods.

Question 2: What should this activity do to support a whole-of-business approach to improve LSFF programming in differing contexts? The food industry -- specifically, the food processing sector -- has a central role in LSFF. LSFF is most likely to succeed and be sustained when we take a whole-of-business approach, supporting processors by assisting in business planning, access to finance, operational efficiencies, compliance with food quality and safety standards, and appropriate marketing -- making this sector more economically viable and resilient, in addition to improving diets and nutrition.

Collaborative partnerships and extensive engagement with food and ingredient companies is critical and beneficial, because these companies can provide both business and technical support to small processors who produce fortified food products and/or ingredients. IFT members, primarily food scientists and technologists, from academia, industry, and government, can offer extensive expertise in food processing, food quality, food safety, and other areas related to ingredient and food production.

IFT's Feeding Tomorrow Foundation, through its Volunteer Globally program, works with USAID's Farmer-to-Farmer implementers to source volunteers from its membership. These volunteers provide valuable food science technical expertise to small processors in developing countries. The Food Science for Relief and Development (FSRD) program, established by IFT's International Division, advocates applying food science and technology to enhance global food security, eliminate malnutrition, and grow sustainable economies in both humanitarian and development contexts. See <https://info.ift.org/en/fsrd-21> for more information. IFT welcomes the opportunity to further work with USAID to create collaborative partnerships.

Question 4: What are the major innovation gaps (food technology, data, compliance, and accountability, etc.) that are holding back LSFF that USAID should prioritize?

The form and delivery of a nutrient is critical to ensure stability, bioavailability, and bioaccessibility of a nutrient in a fortified food product. Further, appropriate packaging is needed to prevent nutrient degradation due to oxidation, inhibit microbial growth, and increase shelf-life. We believe that advances in basic, translational, and applied research in food science and technology is critical to address/implement activities, outlined in the LSFF Results Framework (e.g., Sub-IR2.1.5, Sub-IR2.1.6, Sub-IR4.2.1, Sub-IR4.2.3, and Sub-IR4.2.4) and for effective implementation of the LSFF programs. Research in these areas could also be applied to develop healthy food products for the population at large to improve health and prevent diet-related chronic disease risks, in addition to its applicability in LSFF programs. We trust that USAID will develop RFAs and allocate funding to advance research in food science and technology to identify approaches for successful implementation of the LSFF programs.

The effectiveness of LSFF programs is dependent on many factors, including consumer acceptability of the product. Expansion of fortification of local/regional foods may help increase consumer acceptability. Research on various food matrices and its impact on fortification, presence of food components that inhibit or promote nutrient uptake, sensory attributes, and other characteristics is needed to identify local/regional foods that can be used as vehicles to deliver key nutrients and meet consumer preferences. The program should also ensure that small processors understand the potential interactions between fortification materials and their food products, to ensure proper fortification levels and avoid negative outcomes.

Shifts in dietary patterns could potentially impact nutrient intake and status. For example, a shift to plant-based sources of proteins or novel proteins to reduce intake of animal protein may require iron

fortification. The development of new food sources (such as leaves, algae, insects, etc.) can likewise alter the need for fortification, so it is imperative to keep abreast of food consumption trends.

IFT supports Sub-IR2.1.3 activity outlined in the LSFF Results Framework and believes that the use of digital technology in food fortification could improve food safety and quality along with increasing transparency. IFT's Global Food Traceability Center focuses on enhancing consumer trust through the development and application of traceability systems from farm to consumer. IFT welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with USAID on the use of digitization in food fortification.

IFT strongly believes that academic and continued vocational and technical training, mentoring, internship, certification, etc., (Sub-IR4.1.5 activity) of existing and new government and/or contracted staff in food processing, product development, food safety and quality, food laws and regulation etc., at a country/regional level is critical to ensure continuous implementation of the program, particularly when there is change in staffing. IFT members have expertise in these areas, and we welcome the opportunity to collaborate with USAID to develop educational and training programs.

IFT appreciates the opportunity to provide input on USAID/RFS food fortification activities. We trust that USAID will consider investing in research in food science and technology and in capacity building to advance LSFF programs. Please contact John Ruff, Chief Science & Technology Officer (jruff@ift.org; 312-782-8424) or Farida Mohamedshah, Director, Nutrition Science, Food Laws & Regulations, (fmohamedshah@ift.org; 202-739-1432), if IFT may provide further assistance.

Sincerely,



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