

## Editor's note

Nutrition continues to be an identified priority in the country, and appropriately so bearing in mind the nutritional disorders ranging from over- and under-nutrition as well as HIV/AIDS. As part of the efforts to evaluate progress in the field, a consultative meeting on micronutrient control interventions was held on 17<sup>th</sup> of May 2012 with participants from all relevant UN agencies, local experts and other stakeholders. The purpose of the meeting was to i) review current status of micronutrient deficiencies and micronutrient control interventions ii) review relevancy of new initiatives in micronutrients and its control interventions to the South African context, and iii) get consensus on the way forward to strengthen micronutrient control interventions. The policies to address micronutrient undernutrition include mandatory food fortification, mandatory salt iodation and micronutrient supplementation. There is a paucity of data on micronutrient status at the national level since 2005 when the National Food Consumption Survey: Baseline Fortification I documented a deterioration in vitamin A status in children younger than 9 year of age. More recent data on the vitamin A and iron status will become available from the first ever and soon to be completed South African National Health and Nutrition Examination (SANHANES I). In relation to monitoring policy implementation, it is a concern

that a survey during which fortified food samples were collected at retail level and sent to laboratories for micronutrient analysis, only 20 of the 191 super/sifted maize meal and white bread flour samples analysed (10.5%) complied with the legal requirement for vitamin A, with 42 samples (22%) having levels between 75 and 100% of the legal requirement. In respect of nicotinamide, 96 of the 189 samples analysed (50.8%), were above the legal requirement and 43 (22.8%) between 75 and 100%. The overall compliance for the nicotinamide in the bread flour was much higher than for vitamin A due to the relatively high levels of naturally occurring nicotinamide in wheat compared to maize. The results showed that under-addition of the fortification mix is widespread. Three working groups (the Micronutrient group, the Fortification group and Micronutrient group) were set up and will meet annually. Further developments in the evaluation of nutrition interventions are due to take place in a workshop on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2012 which will review the existing research and programmes around child nutrition and generate ideas for a focus for the evaluation around the integrated nutrition programme.

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