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Food Aid Quality Review Phase II: Quarterly Technical Report No. 8

October 2017-December 2017

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Acronyms

ACF	Action Against Hunger
CAPA	Corrective and Preventive Action
CAWeC	Community Action for the Welfare of Children
CHW	Community Health Workers
CITE	Comprehensive Initiative on Technology Evaluation (MIT group)
COA	Certificate of Analytics
CSB+	Corn-Soy Blend Plus
CSWB	Corn-Soy-Whey Blend
DON	Deoxynivalenol
EED	Environmental Enteric Dysfunction
FACG	Food and Consultative Group
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FAPIG	Food Aid Products Information Guide
FAQR	Food Aid Quality Review
FBFs	Fortified Blended Foods
FEWS NET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
FFP	Office of Food for Peace (USAID)
FSMP	Food for Special Medical Purposes
FVO	Fortified Vegetable Oil
FY 2018	Fiscal Year 2018
GMO	Genetically Modified Organisms
HEB	High-Energy Biscuit
ICN	International Congress of Nutrition
IDI	Individual In-depth Interview
LNS	Lipid-based Nutrient Supplements
LRP	Local and Regional Procurement
MAM	Moderate Acute Malnutrition
MFFAPP	Micronutrient Fortified Food Aid Pilot Project
MINUSTAH	United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
MUAC	Mid-upper Arm Circumference
PDS	Product Description Sheets
PHU	Peripheral Health Unit
PLW	Pregnant and Lactating Women
REFINE	Research Engagement on Food Innovation for Nutritional Effectiveness
RUSF	Ready-to-Use Supplementary Food
RUTF	Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food
RVA	Rapid Visco Analyzer
SAM	Severe Acute Malnutrition
SBCC	Social Behavior Change Communication
SC+	Super Cereal Plus
SNFP	Specialized Nutritious Food Product
SPRING	Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally
SQ-LNS	Small Quantity Lipid-based Nutrient Supplements
TOPS	Technical and Operational Performance Support Program

UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USP	United States Pharmacopeia
ViM	Victory Against Malnutrition
WASH	Water and Sanitation for Health
WBSCM	Web-Based Supply Chain Management
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WHZ	Weight for Height

Food Aid Quality Review (FAQR) Phase III: Quarterly Technical Report Summary

Summary

Covering the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2018 (FY 2018), this report documents progress of the FAQR as a whole, highlights preliminary project findings and outlines actions planned for the coming quarter. The report serves as a vehicle for documenting and communicating the output and impact of FAQR Phase III work.

The Food Aid Quality Review project's goal is to support the U.S. Government's humanitarian agenda by establishing evidence-based information systems, tools, data-gathering and evidence-sharing platforms on food aid for nutrition. Planned to continue through January 2019, FAQR's activities and outputs will enable government-wide actions and public-private engagement around food aid to achieve greater cost-effectiveness for decades to come. For a detailed overview of all FAQR activities see Annex I.

EVIDENCE GENERATION

Generating new field-based evidence to support cost-effective use of products for wasting and stunting



Identifying food aid packaging innovations



EFFICIENCY GAIN

Calculating cost effectiveness of food aid products and programming



Optimizing food aid supply chains



INDUSTRY STANDARDS

Enhancing food safety and quality assurance systems along food aid procurement and shipping claims



Promoting public-private partnerships in food aid



EVIDENCE GENERATION: Supporting best practices, FAQR identifies food aid packaging solutions to optimize product integrity and reduce costs along the supply chain and is generating new field-based evidence to support cost-effective use of products.

EFFICIENCY GAIN: Across the food aid supply chain, the FAQR is developing tools to support cost-effective product and programming choices to make the best use of taxpayer dollars.

INDUSTRY STANDARDS: To enhance food safety and quality standards, FAQR is working with food industry partners on incorporating industry standards into the food aid agenda.

This quarter, the team advanced the FAQR objectives in the following areas:

I. Evidence Generation:

- I.1. The team contributed to building evidence on food aid effectiveness through an ongoing assessment of the current food aid basket. The FAQR team completed a series of key informant interviews, literature scans and focus group discussions to identify how food aid products, processes and programming could be optimized from the implementing partner perspective. The majority of participants responded that the guidance on how to use food aid products should be improved. Implementing partners use a wide variety of tools and resources to design their programs based on personal preference and awareness that a tool or resource exists. The FAQR team is preparing recommendations for USAID/FFP on how to improve guidance on product use. Implementing partners did indicate that regular multi-stakeholder meetings between U.S. government agencies and implementing partners, focused on food aid product options and uses, could be helpful. The FAQR team plans to compile these findings into a report and series of dissemination events.
- I.2. As part of FAQR's research in Sierra Leone on the recovery from Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM), the team designed a counseling card booklet for use by community health workers and mother support groups related to the food aid products used in the supplementary feeding program. The booklet focuses on the proper preparation of ingredients, the daily dosing or ration, not sharing the foods with other family members and improving dietary diversity. The development of the booklet and training activities are key to the implementation of the supplementary feeding program. The effectiveness of the food aid product depends on its programming and proper use; therefore, supplementary feeding programs are integrating education, behavior change and key messaging along with distributing food. The FAQR team is assessing how all of these factors interact. The team plans to make all booklet images, messages and training materials available to the public so that other supplementary feeding programs may benefit from the design and research.
- I.3. The FAQR team hosted two Symposia at the International Congress of Nutrition (ICN):
 - I.3.1. **“Addressing child malnutrition: newer measures to advance prevention and treatment outcomes”** featured six expert researchers presenting on three areas of emerging research in the measurement of child malnutrition and contextual factors. This included body composition, environmental enteric dysfunction (EED) and protein quality. These three areas represent some of the newer measures that give us more information about malnutrition, its context, potential target beneficiaries, outcomes and impacts of our food aid interventions. The Symposium concluded that food aid research and programs will need to expand beyond traditional anthropometric measures to take into consideration new measures of recovery. In addition, they need to consider the roles of EED and protein quality in achieving recovery. However, some proposed indicators of recovery are not fully understood, and in any case, are costly to measure in a programmatic setting. The roles of EED and variations in protein quality also require further research in order to design the most effective possible programs. Further investment and research is needed.

- 1.3.2. **“Food Aid Research: An Update on Food Aid for Preventing & Treating Undernutrition”** shared advances and challenges in food aid research, sought to inform new paradigms of food aid products and programs and clarified remaining questions in the field of food aid. The Symposium highlighted new research on product composition, effectiveness of SQ-LNS (small quantity lipid-based nutrient supplements) and cost-effectiveness assessment of food aid in development and emergency contexts. The environment and context in which we program food aid is not static and the technology continues to evolve. Therefore, innovations in the field of food aid research must keep pace in order to remain impactful.

Upcoming Activities in Fiscal Year 2018, Quarter I, October-December 2017:

In the coming quarter, FAQR is prioritizing completing some key deliverables, promoting FAQR research findings and planning for FAQR Phase III Project Year 3.

1. The FAQR team will host two public dissemination events, one in Burkina Faso and one in Washington, D.C., to share the **Evidence on the Effectiveness and Cost-Effectiveness of Supplementary Foods in the Prevention of Malnutrition in Children in Burkina Faso study results**. This is the culmination of the more than three-year study and will provide operationally-relevant recommendations for those seeking to program food aid more effectively. The team will also provide an opportunity to have a frank discussion of what we have learned from this research and what we still need to know.
2. The FAQR team will finalize and disseminate the MAM tab of the interactive online decision support tool. This tool adds value to the field of food aid decision-making by allowing users to consider not only costs but also the cost-effectiveness of alternative specialized food aid products. The interactive nature of the tool helps users unfamiliar with certain technical aspects navigate the decision-making framework with linked references to current guidance and evidence. It visualizes the impact of considering product and supply chain costs as well as indicators of program effectiveness such as measured impact and coverage on selection of specialized nutritious food aid products.
3. As the FAQR Phase III Project enters the third and final year of implementation, the team will be closely focused on developing a work plan that fully integrates the culmination of all final FAQR deliverables and milestones and will be meeting with USAID/FFP to discuss and finalize the Year 3 Workplan.

FAQR Reports and Manuscripts Published in Quarter I of FY 2018

1. Webb, P., Caiafa, K., Walton, S.M. for the Food Aid Quality Review Group, [Making Food Aid Fit-for-Purpose in the 21st Century: A Review of Recent Initiatives Improving the Nutritional Quality of Foods Used in Emergency and Development Programming](#).¹ Food and Nutrition Bulletin, Vol. 38, Issue 4. December 2017. p. 574-584. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0379572117726422>
2. Breanne K. Langlois, Devika J. Suri, Lauren Wilner, Shelley Marcus Walton, Kwan Ho Kenneth Chui, Kristine R. Caiafa & Beatrice Lorge Rogers (2017): [Self-report](#)

¹ <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0379572117726422>

[vs. direct measures for assessing corn soy blend porridge preparation and feeding behavior in a moderate acute malnutrition treatment program in southern Malawi](#)²,
Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition, DOI:
10.1080/19320248.2017.1374902

² <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19320248.2017.1374902?scroll=top&needAccess=true>

II. Key Activities for the Period October 1-December 31, 2017

The activities listed below are selected to showcase some of the major accomplishments over the quarter. All work streams have ongoing activities.

A. Food Aid Basket

To provide sound recommendations to USAID/FFP on improvements which can be made to the food aid basket, the FAQR team must consider quantitative information about the products (e.g. How much is procured? Who is procuring which products? Which products are not procured?) as well as qualitative information from partners who program these products daily (e.g. Why are some products not procured? Are there products missing from the basket?).

From June to October 2017, the FAQR held interviews with key informants, mostly at implementing partner organizations. The goal of the interviews was to identify how products, their availability, and guidance about their content and use could be improved from the implementing partner perspective.

In this quarter, FAQR synthesized approximately 25 hours of interviews, pulling out key takeaways and shared preliminary conclusions with the implementing partner community to ensure that these conclusions were accurate and reflective of their experience. FAQR coordinated a webinar cohosted by Technical and Operational Program Support Program (TOPS) and the Nutrition Core Group to share conclusions and elicit feedback from webinar participants. Feedback from this webinar indicated that FAQR has addressed topics which are important to implementing partners of food aid and correctly interpreted their input.

Preliminary key takeaways fell into four main themes and included:

1. **Product Mix:** Does the mix of products meet programming needs?
 - Programming would benefit from a more diverse portfolio of specialized nutritious foods.
 - More fortified commodity options would be welcomed.
2. **Product Quality:** Does product quality need to change?
 - The food safety of products is a top concern for partners.
 - Product durability (shelf life) is insufficient and needs to improve.
 - There is no way (or no way that partners are aware of) to provide timely reporting of quality issues.
3. **Product Guidance:** Do partners have the tools they need to make the most of the products?
 - Partners use a range of tools to design and update programs.
 - Different partners are aware of different guidance.
 - Many partners expressed the need for better guidance on how and when products are intended to be used.
 - Partners requested more information relating product expenses to product performance.
4. **Product Updates:** Are partners easily able to stay up-to-date on information about USAID/FFP food aid products?

- Partners get updates through formal and informal channels but there are mixed opinions about the effectiveness of these channels.
- A consistent process for disseminating such information would be welcomed.

Of the 35 participants, a poll of participants (n=22) showed that the most important *and* the most urgent topic area that USAID needs to address is guidance on how to use products. They suggested this can be achieved through regular interdisciplinary meetings with a variety of stakeholders from government and implementing partners, citing the Kansas City meetings as an example.

These takeaways represent a critical piece of qualitative information, but not *all* of the information that has been gleaned from FAQR's information-gathering activities. Complete information will be included in a report which consolidates other feedback FAQR has collected from essential stakeholders. This report will be incorporated into the final deliverable report on the food aid basket and recommended improvements. For each Key Takeaway, there will be a corresponding recommended action that USAID/FFP should take to address the issue, and an estimate of the level of resources needed to complete that action.

B. Field Research

I. Sierra Leone Treatment of MAM Study³

In collaboration with a local consultant and local partner in Sierra Leone, the team designed counseling card booklets for use by community health workers and mother support groups targeting four core areas for information and education activities as part of the ongoing supplementary feeding program.

The key areas were: proper preparation ingredients (i.e. the ratios and quantities of ingredients), the daily dosing or ration, not sharing and improving dietary diversity. There is one card for each area whose images were designed by a local artist, tested in the field and then edited to better present the messages for the local context. The first card depicts proper preparation and is unique to each of the fortified blended flours. The second card depicts a health worker explaining the correct daily dosage. The third card depicts three different sharing scenarios with the caregiver always exhibiting the positive behavior: saying 'no' to an older child who would like taste the food, turning away a friend who asks for some of the food and stopping the person in the market from selling the food. All counseling cards are available for view at the FAQR website [here](#)⁴.

Messaging areas were identified during formative interviews and focus groups in which caregivers were able to report that they understood these messages. Although messages are understood, caregivers did indicate that pressure from other members in the household or broader community may affect their decision-making about preparation and consumption.

³ <http://foodaidquality.org/focus/field-research>

⁴ <https://foodaidquality.org/focus/field-research>

The purpose of these counseling card booklets is to improve the overall effectiveness of each of the four foods in the household by also recruiting community health workers (CHW) and mother support groups to advocate for the foods' proper use. To accomplish this goal, the team trained 2,400 CHWs and lead mothers in a cascade training model over a four-week period. Each CHW or lead mother received a counseling card booklet and specific training on how to counsel using each of the cards in the booklet.

Trainings were conducted at each of the 28 study peripheral health units (PHUs). Because the supplementary feeding program enrolls beneficiaries from all of the Pujehun District (albeit only at the 28 study sites), the team decided to train all CHWs, lead mothers and PHU nurses, so that no potential beneficiary or caregiver would miss the information or advocacy of their fellow CHWs or lead mothers. Each training consisted of six modules: one module on the supplementary feeding program run by Project Peanut Butter, one module for each of the four counseling card messages and one module for proper counseling methods during in-home visits. These trainings were conducted by a local partner organization, Community Action for the Welfare of Children (CAWeC), which has extensive experience in the Pujehun District.

In the next quarter, the team will begin implementing a survey to measure the information uptake of these trainings to these health workers and the potential link to the supplementary feeding program's caregivers and beneficiaries. The program is layered entirely on top of the existing governmental structures, and the survey will assist with analyzing the reach of the program and the strength of the integration with the supplementary feeding program.

C. Knowledge Sharing

I. *Symposia at International Congress of Nutrition (ICN) 2017 in Buenos Aires, Argentina*

FAQR hosted two symposia for the International Congress of Nutrition in October 2017:

I: **“Addressing child malnutrition: newer measures to advance prevention and treatment outcomes”** featured six expert researchers presenting on three areas of emerging research in the measurement of child malnutrition and contextual factors including body composition, environmental enteric dysfunction (EED) and protein quality. These three areas represent newer measures that provide more information about malnutrition, its context, the needs of potential target beneficiaries and how to assess outcomes and impacts of our food aid interventions.

Drs. Cornelia Loechl and Irwin Rosenberg (who stood in for Dr. Susan Roberts who could not attend in person) presented on body composition measurement methods. Body composition tells us about the quality of a child's weight gain (i.e. lean mass versus fat mass accretion) and is predictive of future growth outcomes. For example, lean mass gain is more predictive of linear growth and reduced risk of future malnutrition. Drs. Tahmeed Ahmed and Rosenberg presented on EED. Dr. Rosenberg provided some history and current definitions of EED, while Dr. Ahmed presented on assessment methods and current

research. EED has been found to be highly predictive of stunting in children, so reducing factors associated with EED or addressing the EED directly may be a way to reduce stunting and, in combination with food aid programs, may enhance the effectiveness of food supplements. Drs. Anura Kurpad and Ricardo Uauy presented on protein quality evaluation and the importance of protein quality and specific amino acids in child development. Protein quality is also predictive of stunting, both in the diet and, according to more recent research, through evaluation of serum amino acids.

Food aid research and programs will need to expand beyond traditional anthropometric measures of malnutrition and recovery and need to address these contextual factors in programs to prevent and treat malnutrition. However, challenges remain in improving the accuracy and interpretation of results using these methods. There are still financial and technical barriers to the accessibility of these measures, limiting their ability to be widely utilized in food aid programs, so further investment and research are necessary.

2: ***“Food Aid Research: An Update on Food Aid for Preventing & Treating Undernutrition”*** shared advances and challenges in food aid research, sought to inform new paradigms of food aid products and programs, and elucidated remaining questions in the field of food aid. The session focused on three areas in food aid research: Drs. Kim Michelson and Steve Collins presented findings from their new publications on product composition with regard to soy-protein and animal-protein; Drs. Kay Dewey and Saskia de Pee presented on product effectiveness of SQ-LNS and situations in which it is appropriate to use such products; and Dr. Bea Rogers presented product cost-effectiveness research from FAQR’s field studies in Malawi, Burkina Faso and Sierra Leone, while Tatyana el Khour discussed integrating cost-effectiveness research into programming approaches, specifically focusing on emergency response in humanitarian crises.

Next steps include publishing a discussion paper summarizing what food aid research has taught us so far and offering guidance to policymakers at bilateral and multilateral agencies (including USAID) on what food aid questions remain. Governments, bi- and multi-lateral organizations, family foundations and research institutes must continue to fund food aid research activities focused on these three topics as well as many additional areas. Other priority research goals include identifying: i) strategies, including possible food-based strategies for combating and mitigating the impact of environmental enteric dysfunction (EED); ii) viable packaging and processing techniques for extending the shelf life of food aid products; iii) necessary behavior change communication components of any food aid operation; and iv) how to better provide usable results so research studies can meet design standards to ensure scientific rigor and comparability.

Proceedings from both symposia are forthcoming.

In addition, FAQR presented posters on the following topics (Posters are available for view on the [FAQR website](#).⁵):

- “Accelerated shelf life studies: testing micronutrient stability of new and upgraded food aid products”
- “Methods for rigorous in-home observation conducted during a food aid cost-effectiveness trial in Burkina Faso”
- “Changes in household food insecurity between enrollment and exit from a blanket supplementary feeding program for children 6-23 months old in Burkina Faso”
- “Research Methods Used to Determine Cost-Effectiveness of a Supplementary Feeding Trial to Prevent Child Undernutrition in Burkina Faso”

III. Plans for the Coming Quarter (January-March 2018):

Key activities planned for the coming quarter include:

A. Food Matrices
a. Finalize recommendations for future research based on literature review/landscape analysis on current food matrices and gaps in data.
b. Finalize report on food matrices and nutrient bioavailability based on discussions from the Roundtable hosted as a pre-meeting during the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) annual meeting in 2017.
c. Create protocols for measuring viscosity of porridges using Bostwick testing of fortified blended foods (FBFs) being used in field research studies; conduct testing and analyze results. A more scientific test using Rapid Visco Analyzer (RVA) will be conducted to further support the findings from Bostwick tests. Additionally, study the incorporation of malt in FBFs to increase energy density at lower consistency.
B. Food Aid Basket
a. Food Basket with Existing Commodities: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Present results of the qualitative assessment of which food aid products are used and how well they meet program needs to USAID. ii. Present new product application and approval process to USAID. iii. Identify potential product suppliers.
b. New Products, Technologies and Formulations and Deployment of New Specialized Products: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Conduct a desk review of reports on new products. ii. Engage in a set of meetings to identify potential product reformulations.

⁵ <https://foodaidquality.org/icn>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iii. Assemble an internal FAQR task force to evaluate the Micronutrient Fortified Food Aid Pilot Project (MFFAPP) products as a "method demonstration" of the product application/approval process and write a report on how products fare in this process. iv. Host a workshop with USDA and USAID to present the recommended process and results of the MFFAPP evaluation. v. Work with implementing partners to create a strategy that USAID should follow when: i) changes are made to products, and; ii) changes are made to the product mix which lays out all the information USAID needs to communicate to stakeholders. This strategy should be posted to the FFP Portal. vi. Create a database of all potential suppliers: identify characteristics of companies that produce food aid; identify other companies that have these same characteristics but are not producing food aid commodities. vii. Engage with industry groups and product manufacturers to identify potential new suppliers, including information gathering about whether or not they would consider producing food aid products; then produce a list of new potential suppliers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. Dual-use products <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Work with suppliers to identify potential dual-use products for emergency and non-emergency contexts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> d. Food and Ration Technical Guidance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Conduct a desk review to: i) learn what can be known about how products are rationed in the field; and ii) collect and synthesize current technical guidance on food aid rations.
C. Commodity Management System
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. USAID/FFP Portal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. As part of the ongoing updating process of the USAID/FFP website, review content and provide feedback and new content, as requested, on food aid products and resources. ii. Continue with monthly meetings with USAID/FFP website/graphics team until the process of updating the FFP portal is complete. iii. Provide input to facilitate publicizing the availability of the updated USAID/FFP website to promote its use.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Commodity Reference Guide Fact Sheets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Refine the strategy for regular updating of the Food Aid Product Information Guide (FAPIG) and Product Description Sheets (PDS). Propose a mechanism, internal to FFP, with clear allocation of responsibility for ensuring that the FAPIG and PDS are periodically updated. ii. Continue as needed to review and provide quarterly updates of the fact sheets that will be posted in January as part of the launch of the new FFP Portal.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. Harmonized Specifications and Templates:

- i. Finalize commodity specification documents for the five priority products (Fortified Milled Rice, Corn-Soy Blend *Plus*, Fortified Vegetable Oil, Super Cereal Plus and High Energy Biscuits) in consultation with USAID/ FFP, USDA, industry, and international partners (WFP/UNICEF).
- ii. Support and facilitate the consultative process to adopt the specifications and templates via a harmonization platform, standardizing formats that enhance interaction between USAID and USDA, between the government and the private sector, and between USAID and international partners.

D. Food Aid Packaging Solutions

a. Food Protection:

- i. Review the literature and gather information on packaging technology and performance.
- ii. Consider the possibility of lab-testing selected packaging solutions to confirm their appropriateness, including conducting a trial to test a biodegradable film for lipid-based nutrient supplements (LNS), performance testing of potentially-interesting packaging technologies including bags, cans and films and field testing of potential alternative technologies.
- iii. Participate in the development and update of the food aid products specifications which relate to packaging.

b. Last Mile:

- i. Gather existing data collected throughout FAQR and conduct interviews as necessary to obtain information on costs, losses, distribution practices, supply chain optimization and other factors affecting the efficient distribution of food aid products.
- ii. Develop a report highlighting the three FAQR field studies (Malawi, Burkina Faso and Sierra Leone) and identifying strengths and weaknesses, gaps in knowledge and areas in need of improvement.

E. Food Aid Safety and Quality Systems

a. Supply Chain Oversight:

- i. Meet with USAID/FFP program operations division.
- ii. Complete report detailing the current FFP supply chain procurement process and make recommendations to improve the supply chain.
- iii. Analyze and understand the use and distribution of commodities from Preposition Warehouses.
- iv. Analyze and understand in-country supply chains for Ethiopia.
- v. Develop an Excel-based decision support tool from the mathematical model of supply chain optimization.
- vi. Develop data tables which will be used in scenario analysis.

- b. Food Safety & Quality Assurance Feedback Loop: Finalize Feedback Loop Assessment and Recommendations:

- i. Complete and submit the Food Safety & Quality Assurance Feedback Loop Assessment including recommendations for real-time feedback using current U.S. Government procurement system (WBSCM).
- ii. Design and begin pilot test of the process developed from the Feedback Loop Assessment Recommendations.

F. Cost-Effectiveness

a. Cost-Effectiveness in Response to Emergencies:

- i. Find an emergency response case study to examine and track from procurement to the end of distribution.
- ii. Analyze emergency response operations after receiving data on sudden onset emergency response.

b. Cost-Effectiveness Tools: Decision Support Tool:

- i. Continue to develop the Decision Support Tool through web-interface programming (R Shiny), literature review and team consultation.
- ii. Develop documents demonstrating use of the tool, along with case scenarios.
- iii. Seek Potential User Feedback on the tool from USAID and Implementation Partners.

c. Cost Methodology:

- i. Develop a Cost Matrix Template with Annotated Examples from FAQR cost-effectiveness field studies.
- ii. Collect and analyze cost data for the Sierra Leone MAM Treatment Study.
- iii. Continue to work on cost-effectiveness data analysis for Burkina Faso Prevention Study.

G. Field Research

a. Burkina Faso Prevention Study:

- i. Continue to conduct data analysis.
- ii. Hold results disseminations in the U.S. and Burkina Faso.
- iii. Prepare report and manuscripts based on data analysis.

b. Sierra Leone MAM Treatment Study:

- i. Continue distributing foods for study and continue enrolling participants.
- ii. Continue collecting data for main study and body composition and EED sub-studies.
- iii. Pre-test and implement the CHW & Lead Mother IDI.
- iv. Continue implementation of the pilot phase of data collection for the neurocognitive sub-study.

H. Interagency Communications and Harmonization

a. U.S. Interagency:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Facilitate and work with the U.S.-focused interagency group planning committee to plan the U.S.-government interagency meeting to take place in late March/early April 2018. ii. Provide logistics and administrative support to hold the U.S. Interagency Group Meeting. iii. Hold meeting of the U.S. Interagency group in late March/early April 2018.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. U.S.-Global Interagency (Harmonization) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Ongoing support of International Inter-Agency Working Group. ii. Plan for May 2018 International Inter-Agency Working Group Meeting.
<p>I. Knowledge Sharing</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. International Congress of Nutrition (ICN) 2017: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Prepare proceedings from each Symposium and submit each to a peer-reviewed journal.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Evidence Summit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Plan for Evidence Summit via logistics and program committees.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. REFINE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Disseminate quarterly REFINE resource updates. ii. Reassess criteria for REFINE search and inclusion. iii. Finalize research gap analysis. iv. Finalize food aid product studies methods scan and prepare for publication. v. Update REFINE database on an ongoing basis. vi. Reach out to food aid researchers and principal investigators on an ongoing basis to update REFINE database.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> d. FAQR Communications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Continue to disseminate FAQR outputs. ii. Continue to update the FAQR website. iii. Develop Research Uptake and Sustainability Strategy for final project outputs.

Annex I. Overview of the Food Aid Quality Review (FAQR) Phase III Activities

For more information on FAQR Phase III, please visit the [FAQR website](#)⁶.

I. Background

The Food Aid Quality Review (FAQR) provides the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Office of Food for Peace (FFP) and its partners with actionable recommendations on ways to improve nutrition among vulnerable people for whom the direct distribution of food aid can make a significant impact. FAQR Phase I recommendations were published in *Delivering Improved Nutrition: Recommendations for Changes to U.S. Food Aid Products and Programs*⁷. That report led to FAQR Phase II's focus on reformulating Fortified Blended Foods, the inclusion of lipid-based products in FFP's commodity list and testing new products under field conditions. A full summary of FAQR Phase II accomplishments is highlighted in the [Food Aid Quality Review Phase II Closeout Report](#)⁸.

FAQR III⁹ focuses on generating links between research on food product formulation and recommendations on cost-effective programming and policy-level action among national and multilateral institutions engaged in food assistance. Tufts is working closely with several domestic and international collaborators, including USAID, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and United Nations (UN) partners, all of whom are committed to strengthening the evidence base for use of specialized food products for targeted nutrition goals. The work of FAQR III is framed under three major topics related to food aid: **1) Products, 2) Programming, and 3) Processes.**

Products

With a view to making actionable recommendations to USAID, Tufts is examining a number of priority issues, such as how food matrices ("the nutrient and non-nutrient components of foods and their molecular relationship to each other"¹⁰) affect bioavailability of nutrients and digestibility of products; the potential for thermal/non-thermal processing technologies to improve food matrices; potential roles for existing products that are rarely used today, as well as new products (which may include fortificant powders) and novel packaging technologies to improve resistance to infestation, shelf life and efficiency of handling; dual-use products for emergency response; and completion of the data collection, analysis and reporting on field studies which assess the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of various newly-formulated food products for the prevention and treatment of malnutrition in children.

⁶ <http://foodaidquality.org>

⁷ pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnadz842.pdf

⁸ pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00M9B8.pdf

⁹ Contract awarded to Tufts University's Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy for the period covering Feb. 1, 2016 to Jan. 31, 2019 with two option years.

¹⁰ Source: United States Department of Agriculture: National Agricultural Library (<https://agclass.nal.usda.gov>)

Programming

One important focus of FAQR field research and statistical modeling is the cost-effectiveness of various products used in operational settings. This includes strategy development for pre-positioned specialized nutritious products, guidance on options for their use, elaboration of a strategy for responding to food needs in the initial stages of a sudden onset emergency and dissemination of cost calculation tools. FAQR is generating improved technical guidance, sharing details on research protocols used in testing new food aid products in the field and making further progress in harmonizing product specifications among food aid donors.

Processes

FAQR III provides recommendations to USAID on institutional and industry processes for capacity building, including the institutionalization and strengthening of interagency technical collaborations, mechanisms to ensure greater policy and product harmonization domestically and internationally. This provides recommendations for enhanced supply chain oversight, establishes stronger and more user-friendly quality assurance feedback loops and promotes food safety and quality standards which can also be applied to local and regional food procurement.

FAQR III organizes its activities into the following work streams:

A	Food Matrices
B	Food Aid Basket
C	Commodity Management System
D	Food Aid Packaging Solutions
E	Food Aid Safety and Quality Systems
F	Cost-Effectiveness
G	Field Research
H	Interagency Communications and Harmonization
I	Knowledge Sharing

Overview of Work Stream Activities**A. Food Matrices**

Activities related to:

- 1) *Examining the evidence on how the composition and structure of food products influence the bioavailability, absorption and physiological utilization of nutrients; and*
- 2) *Exploring innovations in thermal and non-thermal food processing, including: perspectives on food functionality (quality control), nutrient content and bioavailability, palatability, and digestibility.*

Contributions of these activities will be:

- *Understanding the effect of consuming food aid products on the health outcomes of beneficiaries.*
- *Making recommendations for how to design better food products which can carry energy and nutrients more effectively.*
- *Achieving more favorable cost-benefit ratio in programming.*

B. Food Aid Basket

The “food aid basket” refers to the list of Title II products available for programming. Activities related to the Food Aid Basket include:

- 1) *Enhancing the food basket with existing commodities;*
- 2) *Assessing new products for inclusion in the food basket;*
- 3) *Exploring dual-use products for emergency response;*
- 4) *Developing a strategy to introduce new or modified specialized products;*
- 5) *Providing food and ration technical guidance; and*
- 6) *Facilitating the institutionalization of an expert-driven periodic review of nutrition evidence.*

Contributions of these activities will be:

- *Modernizing the range of food aid products used in projects and programs administered by USAID/FFP will lead to more efficient, effective and cost-effective programming.*
- *Addressing key policy goals:*
 - *Food aid products are consistent with current research and prevailing expert opinion of what works in nutrition-focused interventions.*
 - *Available food aid products allow for various food baskets which are sufficient and appropriate to their programming contexts.*
 - *Sudden onset emergencies are responded to with appropriate, cost-effective food aid.*

C. Commodity Management System

Activities include:

- 1) *Updating and streamlining the USAID/FFP commodities resources portal;*
- 2) *Developing and modernizing commodity reference guide fact sheets; and*
- 3) *Harmonizing specifications and templates for food aid commodities.*

Contributions of these activities will be:

- *Enhance real-time information access through the USAID/FFP Commodities Resource Portal, including modernized commodity fact sheets.*
- *Raise the profile of the U.S. food aid basket and better present commodity information to stakeholders.*
- *Harmonize food aid products among agencies (USAID, USDA, WFP, United Nations Children’s Fund [UNICEF], MSF) to make them interchangeable in programming and accepted by multiple agencies and programmers.*
- *Create specifications that apply to U.S. and non-U.S. sourced products which are in line with industry practice standards and created with stakeholder input.*

D. Food Aid Packaging Solutions

Activities related to:

- 1) *Exploring the potential for improved food aid packaging.*

Contribution of these activities will be:

- *Identification of alternative packaging materials, sizes and forms will reduce breakage, improve resistance to insect and rodent infestation, and optimize transport and handling, thus reducing product losses and leading to cost savings.*

E. Food Aid Safety and Quality Systems

Activities related to:

- 1) *Review of supply chain oversight;*
- 2) *Assessment of the existing food safety and quality feedback loop; and*
- 3) *Quality assurance for local and regional procurement (LRP).*

Contributions of these activities will be:

- *USAID will have new data-driven, decision-aid tools which can quantify the impact of decisions for procuring and distributing food aid locally, regionally and/or globally.*
- *An improved supply chain positively affects the number of beneficiaries reached, total amount of commodities sent, lead times, total cost of the program and integrity of products once they reach the end user.*
- *Stronger and more user-friendly quality assurance feedback loops promote food safety and quality standards which can also be applied to local and regional food procurement.*
- *The system identifies incidents and provides information upstream on issues detected after arrival in a country through the “last mile,” creating an institutional memory of food aid product incidents and how they were addressed.*
- *Recommendations are in place for ensuring the food safety and quality of LRP products, including that they follow U.S. food aid product specifications.*

F. Cost-Effectiveness

Activities include:

- 1) *Developing a strategy for assessing cost-effectiveness of new modalities of response to emergencies;*
- 2) *Developing a decision-support tool for food aid programs; and*
- 3) *Developing the costing methodology and cost-effectiveness analysis plan for ongoing field studies.*

Contributions of these activities will be:

- *Evidence on cost and the cost-effectiveness of using specialized food aid products will contribute to decision-making around better designed and implemented food aid policy and programming.*
- *Building capacity within USAID and USDA for considering products not just based on price per ton of a food but based on both cost and effectiveness of an intervention will contribute to more cost-effective programming.*

G. Field Research

Activities include:

- 1) *Malawi feasibility study assessing the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of changes in Corn-Soy-Whey Blend (CSWB) oil ration quantity, packaging and Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) messaging focused on increasing the amount of oil added to CSWB porridge prepared by caregivers;*
- 2) *Burkina Faso Study comparing the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of four supplementary foods for prevention of stunting and moderate acute malnutrition (MAM);*
- 3) *Sierra Leone study comparing the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of four supplementary foods for treatment of MAM; and*
- 4) *Development of guidance and examples to inform future research protocols intended to assess the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of foods, rations and programming approaches related to preventing and treating malnutrition.*

Contributions of these activities will be:

- *The study results will guide decisions about what commodities to use in supplementary feeding programs.*
- *Results will answer questions related to effectiveness, cost-effectiveness and determinants of recovery/optimal growth (drivers of relapse, sustained recovery, body mass, cognitive development, linear growth) as well as provide contextual information about sharing and use of the rations.*
- *The studies will address programming innovations including the role of SBCC, “last mile” concerns and the true cost of interventions in emergency/non-emergency settings.*

H. Interagency Communications and Harmonization

Activities related to:

- 1) *Interagency consultations (U.S.-focused and U.S.-global) toward greater harmonization around products, processes and programming; and institutionalization of interagency communication and collaboration mechanisms.*

Contributions of these activities will be:

- *Discuss and promote agreement around international standards in the formulation, production, and use of food aid products drawing from both normative and scientific guidance is imperative to the success of the food aid agenda.*
- *Propose mechanism(s) to institutionalize U.S. and U.S.-global interagency consultations and communication.*
- *Facilitate generation of institutional knowledge toward continued improvements to food aid products, processes and programs.*

I. Knowledge Sharing

Activities include:

- 1) *Sharing FAQR activities and outputs with a wide variety of stakeholders;*
- 2) *Research Engagement on Food Innovation for Nutritional Effectiveness (REFINE)—<http://www.refinenutrition.org>; and*
- 3) *FAQR communications.*

Contributions of these activities will be:

- *Ensuring that evidence generated by FAQR and other research is accessible to stakeholders, promoting evidence-based policy-making and practice within the food aid agenda.*
- *Disseminating emerging evidence relevant to food aid; highlighting ongoing knowledge gaps and study priorities to help improve operational practice and promote evidence-based policy-making and a focus for future research investments.*

Annex 2. Meetings and Events during the Period October 1, 2017-December 31, 2017

Select meetings include the following:

- **SPRING Nutrition Conference (October 4, 2017)**
The Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally (SPRING) project hosted a learning event in Washington, D.C. to share key lessons learned and results achieved over the past six years through the SPRING programs activities, along with a wide range of tools developed to strengthen evidence-based nutrition programming.
- **Site Visit to Edesia Nutrition (October 6, 2017)**
FAQR visited Edesia Nutrition's new facility in Rhode Island to i) understand the packaging performance needs and challenges of a RUF supplier, ii) learn about the potential for RUF suppliers to perform research and development on novel product formulations, and iii) respond to their request to hear about recent activities of the International Inter-Agency Working group on Specialized Nutritious Food Products. During the meeting, Edesia presented the idea of having RUF manufacturers supply USAID-branded distribution bags instead of printing the USAID logo on the RUF pouches. FAQR and Edesia discussed strategies to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of this new packaging system. The effect of their cooperation could promote interagency harmonization and reduce costs and lead time. In addition, Edesia provided frank feedback on the challenges faced by RUF manufacturers in driving food aid innovation. Overall, this was an invitation extended by Edesia that FAQR used to inform its activities and strategy for working with other manufacturers.
- **International Congress of Nutrition (ICN) (October 15-20, 2017)**
The FAQR team attended the International Congress of Nutrition (ICN) in Buenos Aires, Argentina. FAQR hosted two symposia, presented several posters and attended relevant sessions. For further information see [the Knowledge Sharing section](#).
- **Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences (INFORMS) Annual Meeting (October 22-25, 2017)**
FAQR presented on the team's work on supply chain optimization at the annual INFORMS conference in Houston, Texas. The session was attended by stakeholders from academia, industry, U.S. Government organizations and implementing partners. It reviewed the impact that data analytics can have on supply chain operations. The team showed examples gained from data analysis on how seasonality and service level might affect overall commodity cost.
- **Supplier Meetings for Fortified Milled Rice and Fortified Vegetable Oil (October 31-November 3, 2017)**
USAID/FFP, in partnership with USDA, WFP, and U.S.-based suppliers of two products (Fortified Milled Rice and Fortified Vegetable Oil) met to discuss the private/public partnership of these entities. The Fortified Milled Rice meeting focused on the changes in the specifications the suppliers would be seeing in the next three to six months, the approval of two technologies (Coated Rice Kernels and Extruded Rice Kernels) to fortify rice and the continued effort to scale up the use of Fortified Milled Rice in programming. The Fortified

Vegetable Oil meetings focused on issues concerning food safety and quality issues of the product and packing. These meetings were in preparation for updating the specifications of these products in November and December. Drafts were circulated to workshop participants.

- **Supplier Meetings for Fortified-Blended Flours (FBFs) and Ready-to-Use Foods (RUFs) (November 8 & 9, 2017)**

USAID/FFP, in partnership with USDA and U.S.-based suppliers of two products (FBFs and RUFs) met to discuss the private/public partnership of these entities. These meetings are a continuation of meetings which have been regularly held between USAID/FFP, USDA and suppliers. The FBFs meeting focused on changes to the products packaging (bags) specifically and a prototype of a new bag was presented. There were also discussions on FBF specifications changes related to microbiological testing and requirements as well auditing frequency. The RUF meeting focused on forecasting and contractual issues that were explained by both parties, as well as branding and auditing concerns from the suppliers.

- **ACF Research for Nutrition Conference (November 13, 2017)**

FAQR participated in the Action Against Hunger (ACF) Research for Nutrition Conference in Paris and presented a poster entitled “Who are we really feeding with specialized food aid products?” The poster summarized descriptive statistics about sharing practices among beneficiaries of a blanket supplementary feeding program from the FAQR prevention study in Burkina Faso. The main comments received about the poster during the conference were that widespread sharing is not surprising and questions were raised about what to do about it.

Another important topic of discussion at the conference was about the use of mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) vs. weight for height (WHZ) in diagnosing and treating malnutrition. The conclusion of presenter Michael Golden was that WHZ only or MUAC only will miss many children, so they should be used in combination. Innovations in the diagnosis of malnutrition including Click MUAC, bioelectrical impedance, leptin point of care testing, SAM (severe acute malnutrition) photo diagnosis were also discussed.

- **Webinar “The USAID Food Aid Product Mix: Presentation of Stakeholder Feedback” (November 16, 2017)**

In partnership with the CORE Group Nutrition Working Group, FAQR presented the responses gathered during a series of interviews with development, nutrition and health practitioners working on USAID-funded programs that use food aid. In these interviews, FAQR asked: “Does the mix of available food aid products meet programming needs? Is guidance on their use helpful and sufficient? How can donors better communicate about food aid with implementing partners?” FAQR presented the responses to these questions, elicited feedback from participants on their experience with these issues and explored possible solutions with participants.

- **Meeting with Ajinomoto (November 22, 2017)**

Ajinomoto traveled to FAQR’s Boston office to give a presentation on a Ready-to-Use food product which is formulated with Ajinomoto-manufactured amino acids, rather than whole

proteins. They presented information about the company, details about the product itself and the results from a recent effectiveness trial that used this new product.

The FAQR team concluded that more information about the product is needed from Ajinomoto before making a recommendation about whether USAID should adopt the product into its programming. FAQR will continue to communicate with Ajinomoto and continue to work on developing a standard application for new product proposals.

- **Sierra Leone National Nutrition Fair (November 23-25, 2017)**

This was the first national nutrition fair to be held in Sierra Leone. FAQR and four foods study partner organizations were represented as part of the Pujehun District delegation to the fair. The first day was characterized by prepared remarks from partner ministries, district health teams and implementing partners. The second day was filled with a showcase of different activities by districts and the final day provided an opportunity for individuals to ask questions and gather more information of activities around Sierra Leone.

- **Food Aid Consultative Group (FACG) Meeting (December 7, 2017)**

This semiannual meeting provided an update on current and projected budgets for USAID/FFP, USDA/McGovern-Dole and USDA/Food for Progress.

Research was presented from the MIT Comprehensive Initiative on Technology Evaluation (CITE) group on possible improvement to packaging for bagged products. They presented their findings from the trial they conducted in 2016 to test alternative packaging options for food aid commodities (including hermetic bags, insect-growth regulators and super sacks). They highlighted the potential for reducing the need for fumigation and therefore reducing costs.

The global food security and nutrition update with projections for 2018 for humanitarian assistance needs was provided by the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET). FEWS NET reported an overall increase in humanitarian assistance need for FY 2018 based on the five ongoing famines and global forecasts.

- **USAID Sierra Leone Site Visit (December 11, 2017)**

Representatives of the Sierra Leone Missions' USAID Food for Peace office visited Pujehun town and district. They were able to visit a supplementary feeding program site in Karlu, a counseling card training in Portoru and meet with the field survey team in Portoru.

Annex 3. REFINE Twitter and Website Analytics

@REFINEnutrition Twitter Analytics for this quarter:

Total Followers: 180

	Tweets	Retweets	Likes	Link Clicks ¹¹	Tweet Impressions
October	24	43	57	34	10,900
November	11	20	28	37	5,320
December	11	16	22	26	6,348
TOTAL	46	79	107	97	22,568

www.refinenutrition.org Google Analytics for this quarter:

	Total Number of Sessions ¹²	New Sessions ¹³	Average Pages Per Session ¹⁴
October	134	96	2.02
November	289	226	2.17
December	110	76	1.89
TOTAL	533	398	2.07
July – September 2017	254	204	1.81
Change from last quarter	+109.8%	+95%	+14.36%
Jan. 2017 – Dec. 2017	1,344	1,007	(average) 2.1

¹¹ Derived from Hootsuite, a social media management dashboard.

¹² “Session:” A user’s interaction on the site from the time a user logs onto the site until they are inactive on the site for 30 minutes.

¹³ “New Session:” A user’s first visit to the site during that period of Google analytics.

¹⁴ “Average Pages Per Session:” Average number of pages visited by a user during one session.

Annex 4. FAQR Twitter and Website Analytics

@foodaidquality Twitter Analytics for this quarter:

Total Followers: 82

	Tweets	Retweets	Likes	Link Clicks	Tweet Impressions
October	31	24	48	18	11,000
November	20	12	23	32	6,704
December	9	8	7	13	3,152
TOTAL	60	44	78	63	20,854

www.foodaidquality.org Google Analytics for this quarter:

	Total Number of Sessions ¹⁷	New Sessions ¹⁸	Average Pages Per Session ¹⁹
October	161	105	2.69
November	171	137	1.91
December	117	90	2.22
TOTAL	449	332	2.27
July – September 2017	589	353	2.88
Change from last quarter	-23.77%	-5.95%	-21.18%
Jan. 2017 – Dec. 2017	1,697	1,003	(average) 3.31

Annex 5: Inter-Agency Working Group for Specialized Nutritious Food Products Communique



Inter-Agency Working Group for Specialized Nutritious Food Products 10th Annual Meeting Communique Monday, June 12- Tuesday, June,13, 2017 Copenhagen, Denmark

Introduction to 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**¹⁵.

Key Topics Discussed

The key topics discussed during the 10th Inter-Agency meeting (held June 12th-13th, 2017 at the UNICEF Supply Division, Copenhagen, Denmark) were a review of accomplishments since the June 2016 meeting; updates on the harmonized ready-to-use food specifications; recent Codex and World Health Organization (WHO) activities relevant to specialized nutritious food products; how the interagency group can work with normative bodies on key action items moving forward; a process of considering new member organizations to the Inter-Agency Working Group; food safety and quality including shelf life, joint inspection and auditing; and updates on current and ongoing research and emerging topics of interest to the group including reducing added sugars in SNFPs, understanding factors to promote linear growth and alternative products/ingredients including acceptability studies and measuring bioavailability.



Image 1: Ready to Use Supplementary Food (RUSF) distribution, Borno (Nigeria). Credit—UNICEF Nederland, 2017

¹⁵ Inter-Agency Working Group for Specialized Nutritious Food Products Terms of Reference, October 2016

Attending Organizations

- United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
- World Food Programme (WFP)
- United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)
- Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)
- Tufts University Food Aid Quality Review (FAQR) acting as Secretariat
- World Health Organization (WHO)—
attended as an observer on June 13th, 2017

Below is a summary of the meetings proceedings highlighting points of agreement, areas where ongoing discussion is needed and priority areas for the next year, organized by priority workstreams as defined by the Inter-Agency Working Group.

Priority Workstreams Defined by the Inter-Agency Working Group

Workstream 1: Harmonization of Inter-Agency approaches to defining specifications for SNFPs

- Harmonized procurement specifications
- Program input

Workstream 2: Harmonization of approach to suppliers’ approval process including product evaluation and auditing

- Product evaluation
- Auditing
- Supplier approval process

Workstream 3: Addressing product quality concerns and harmonized response to adverse food safety events

- Food Quality Assurance
- Crisis management

Workstream 4: Local capacity development on SNFPs

- Local Regional Procurement

Workstream 5: Inter-Agency Working Group Communications

- Liaising with normative bodies: Codex, WHO
- Consultations on programmatic issues/suggestions

Workstream 6: Research

- Identify research areas of interest

Points of Agreement

Workstream 1: Harmonization of Inter-Agency approaches to defining specifications for SNFPs

- Identified areas for **increased interagency coordination related to program technical guidance**: Gathering feedback from the field on use of food aid products, links between SNFP supply chain and program guidance.
- The Inter-Agency Working Group should **adopt a joint approach to evaluating new formulations for SNFPs** (e.g. alternative ingredients).
- Joint work on **high energy biscuit (HEB) reformulation**, led by WFP and USAID.
- Joint work to **refine micronutrient powder (MNP) specifications**, led by UNICEF and WFP.
- Continue joint work on **updating or revising specifications for SNFPs of interest** to inter-agency members.

Workstream 2: Harmonization of approach to suppliers' approval process including product evaluation and auditing

- Continue to coordinate a **small working group focused on food safety**:
 - Need for a defined process for **product stability and process capability assessment**.
 - **Audit of SNFP suppliers** (corrective and preventive action [CAPA] follow up, planning of next audits).
 - Share **information about non-conformities** of SNFP suppliers.
 - **Harmonize response to adverse food safety events** with common response to SNFP suppliers.
- Consider **harmonizing stability study guidance for Ready-to-Use Foods (RUFs)** between all agencies.

Workstream 3: Addressing product quality concerns and harmonized response to adverse food safety events

- **Consolidate agency data on Certificates of Analysis (COAs)** for RUFs and the harmonized premix.
- Harmonize the **approach for addressing COA results with suppliers**.

Workstream 4: Local capacity development on SNFPs

- **Continue to focus on building local capacity for SNFP suppliers**.

Workstream 5: Inter-Agency Working Group Communications

- **Action items for discussion with normative bodies**:
 1. Clarification on WHO guidance related to 10% added free sugar;
 2. Specific nutrition guidance;
 3. Food safety—guidance on contaminants;
 4. Protein quality; and
 5. Reformulation and alternative ingredients – what evidence is needed?
- Decision for accepting of new member organizations to the Inter-Agency Working Group will be made by reviewing new organization applications and by a consensus vote—the Working Group will **finalize the process for considering new member organizations and application template for new members** by July 2017.
- Approved **communications strategy for the Inter-Agency Working Group** to include:
 - Producing a two-page communique after each meeting to be proactively shared publicly through a variety of forums and internally within agencies.

- Each agency will seek approval for a common interagency website to be hosted on the FAQR site (www.foodaidquality.org).
- Joint communications will be issued on behalf of concerned agencies when there are updates to product specifications, monographs etc. for SNFPs.

Workstream 6: Research

- Defined **new areas of research of interest** to the inter-agency group.

Research on SNFPs

- Genetically modified organism (GMO) restrictions
 - Better understand impact of GMO restrictions on SNFPs, how to program food aid where GMO restrictions limit use of products.
- Assessing bioavailability of micronutrients in SNFP product matrix.
- Assessing aflatoxin and other contaminants levels such as Deoxynivalenol (DON) in SNFP and in staple crops which are used as key ingredients in SNFPs, to fix/update specifications for aflatoxins and other contaminants in SNFP.
- Stability studies and process capability assessment.
- Packaging studies.

Research on the context in which SNFPs should be programmed

- Relapse—causes of relapse, rates of relapse, prevention of relapse, relapse as a potential consequence to changes in SNFP programming.
- Factors influencing wasting.
- Studies that are designed to look at incidence rather than prevalence (longitudinal data).
- Evaluate how to integrate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and social behavior change communication (SBCC) into SNFP programming.
- Understanding adherence to food aid ration—sharing and selling.
- Seasonality influences on programming.
- Supplementation of pregnant and lactating women (PLWs)—targets for that beneficiary population.
- Dosage throughout treatment phase.
- Replication of approaches.
- Impact of parasites—gut microbiome—on nutrition outcomes and growth.
- Other measures of growth—body composition, cognitive function.



Image 2: Measuring for malnutrition, Bangladesh 2014. Credit—USAID/FFP Flickr, Save the Children

Points Raised for Ongoing Discussion/Consideration

Workstream I: Harmonization of interagency approaches to defining specifications for SNFPs

- **New formulations** for SNFPs (e.g. alternative ingredients)

- Define the **evidence and research methodology** needed for new formulations with alternative ingredients
- Determine what **communication is needed to suppliers regarding new formulations** with alternative ingredients.
- Discussion of **technical guidance for programming of new formulations** with alternative ingredients.
- Review of **updated Super Cereal Plus (SC+)** with amylase specification.
- **Standardize labeling** for RUFs.
- **Packaging improvements** for SNFPs.

Workstream 2: Harmonization of approach to suppliers' approval process including product evaluation and auditing

- Ongoing discussion for more **focus on process monitoring and hazard analysis, and critical control points (HACCP)** for quality audits for SNFP suppliers.

Workstream 4: Local capacity development on SNFPs

- **Capacity of local suppliers** (and cost).

Workstream 5: Inter-Agency Working Group Communications

- **Regulatory classification of Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF)** as a Food for Special Medical Purposes (FSMP) through **Codex** and other normative bodies.
- **Liaise with WHO on evolving guidance to reduce sugar in food aid formulas** and discuss implications for products and programming.
- **Codex Guidelines**
 - WHO joint statement—ensuring nutrient levels reflective of what is laid out in Codex Guidelines for RUTF.

Workstream 6: Research

- **Protein quality requirements for SNFPs** (review WHO and Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO] guidelines, evidence on protein quality).

Priority Areas for Inter-Agency Work in the Next Year (with lead agencies indicated)

Workstream 1: Harmonization of inter-agency approaches to defining specifications for SNFPs

- Expanded update on improved RUFs and harmonized premix (Q4, 2017) (WFP)
- Report on the HEB 2.0 (Q1, 2018) (USAID & WFP)
- Update on SC+ specification (Q4, 2017) (USAID & WFP)
- Working group on MNP specification harmonization (TBD) (UNICEF & WFP)

Workstream 3: Addressing product quality concerns and harmonized response to adverse food safety events



Image 3: United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) distribution of HEBS, 2008. Credit—U Photo (Flickr)/Logan Abassi

- Organize quality control and auditing meeting (Q4, 2017) (MSF)

Workstream 5: Inter-Agency Working Group Communications

- United States Pharmacopeia (USP) MNP Monograph Draft-review during public comment period (Q3, 2017) (UNICEF)
- Codex Guideline for RUTF—provide agency positions prior to next Codex meeting (Q3, 2017) (UNICEF)
- Comments on WHO Joint Statement for management of acute malnutrition— (Q3, 2017) (UNICEF & WFP)
- Criteria for new members to Inter-Agency Working Group and application (Q3, 2017) (Secretariat)
- Communications (Secretariat):
 - Seek approvals by all agencies for Inter-Agency website (Q4, 2017)
 - Sharing of communique (internal and external) (Q3, 2017)

Workstream 6: Research

- Define the evidence and research methodology needed for new formulations and alternative ingredients for SNFPs (TBD) (Secretariat)
- Review of research on protein quality (TBD) (Secretariat)

Plans for Next Meeting

Date: June 2018

Location: Hosted by MSF, Brussels, Belgium

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 or the below agency contacts.

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- **World Food Programme (WFP):** Nancy Aburto, Chief and Head—Nutrition-Specific Unit, nancy.aburto@wfp.org

Annex 6. Four Foods Study Sierra Leone Enrollment Figures

