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**Inter-Agency Working Group for Specialized Nutritious Food Products
12th Annual Meeting Communiqué
Wednesday, June 19th-Thursday, June 20th, 2019
Geneva, Switzerland**

Goal of the 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. (Inter-Agency Working Group for Specialized Nutritious Food Products Terms of Reference, October 2016)

The purpose of this document is to share the main topics discussed, points of agreement, and future priority actions that resulted from the 12th Inter-Agency Working Group for Specialized Nutritious Food Products. (held June 19th and 20th, 2019 at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Logistics Center, Geneva, Switzerland)

Key Topics Discussed

The key topics discussed during the meeting were: (a) Accomplishments since the September 2018 meeting; (b) updates on the harmonized ready-to-use food (RUF) specifications; (c) new product development including product design to support programming and harmonization of processes to approve new products; (d) updates on recent World Health Organization (WHO) activities relevant to specialized nutritious food products; (e) programming considerations for SNFPs and relevant research; and (f) food safety and quality including traceability and incident reporting, joint inspection, process capabilities, and auditing.

Major Outcomes

- Agreed to ongoing collaboration on the specifications for High Energy Biscuit (HEB) 2.0 and lipid-based nutrient supplements—small quantity (LNS-SQ).
- Agreed to ongoing work to improve packaging. Specific areas of interest include labeling, performance and environmental sustainability related to packaging.
- Confirmed that WHO does not need to approve new formulations for RUTFs that meet the current WHO guidance, as long as the nutrient targets for RUTF and requirement of 50% protein source from dairy are met.
- WHO agreed that in any future guidance it needs to be made clear that the proposed nutrient composition in the Joint Statement on Community-based Management of Severe Acute Malnutrition are to be used as a guide for target nutrient intakes from specific foods for specific populations, rather than limits for manufacturing specifications.
- A harmonized table of use recommendations for SNFPs will be developed and will include guidance on programming products for children and pregnant and lactating women (PLWs).
- Substitution of Supercereal (SC) with Supercereal Plus (SC+) or new ready-to-use products is a topic of concern to be considered for ongoing work for this group.
- Agencies will explore opportunities to capture more information relevant to product performance in existing operational research.
- Agencies will continue to develop traceability and incident reporting feedback loops with a focus on generating data that can be aggregated to understand trends.
- Process capability indicators are being introduced to manufacturers and will become a requirement to be integrated into the harmonized auditing frame.
- Newer inter-agency members (ACF and ICRC) will participate in joint audits where relevant.
- Inter-Agency members will develop and adopt a secretariat transition plan.

Points of Agreement

Areas for Ongoing Discussion

Workstream I: Harmonization of Inter- Agency Approaches to Defining Specifications for SNFPS

- Ongoing collaboration on specification for HEB 2.0
 - Ongoing collaboration on specification update for LNS-SQ
 - Ongoing work to improve packaging and packaging performance
 - Specific areas of interest include labeling and environmental sustainability related to packaging
 - A proposal will be made for a joint UNICEF and WHO letter stating that WHO does not need to approve/reject RUTF with new formulations that meet the current WHO guidance for RUTF, as long as the nutrient targets and requirement of 50% protein source from dairy are met
- Codex standard for RUTF (UNICEF, MSF, USAID)
 - Specific areas for work include additives, protein quality, processing technologies
 - Next generation product innovations for SNFPs including innovations that address food matrices, gut health and protein quality (USAID, UNICEF, WFP)
 - Package labeling including local language (WFP, UNICEF)
 - Environmental sustainability related to packaging (WFP)
 - Vitamin A levels in RUTF (MSF, UNICEF, WFP)
 - Evidence is needed on the impact of temperature variations on micronutrient in product and how to improve performance of this micronutrient within the product. UNICEF will share data with suppliers and recommend some remedial actions
 - Further data is needed on shelf life, stability of product, storage and transport condition, interaction with micronutrient suppliers
 - Engagement with WHO as they go through the guideline development process to review current guidance on protein sources in RUTF (All)
 - Further guidance/collaboration with WHO to inform the approach for validation of new products/formulations which do not meet the current WHO general guidance (UNICEF)

Points of Agreement

Areas for Ongoing Discussion

Workstream 2: Operations (Programming and Protocols) and Research

- A harmonized table of use recommendations for SNFPs will be developed
 - Guidance on programming products for PLWs should be further defined and included in the use table
 - Substitution of SC (with SC+ or new ready to use foods) is a topic of concern to consider for ongoing work
 - The Inter-Agency working group should explore opportunities to capture more product relevant information in existing operational research
 - e.g. Sharing, consumption information, last mile, use
- Programming needs for a product (ready to use) that is suitable for adults (mainly PLWs and the chronically ill) (WFP)
 - The group did not support the idea to modify the packaging to show possible sub-division as this is not a recommended use of the product.
 - MSF is involved in a project for RUTF doser/distributor to be used in hospital settling for the transition phase. This would solve the problem of dosage of RUTF during the transition phase. This can be presented during the next annual meeting.
 - Consider opportunities within the Upcoming Global Summit (2020) hosted by UN agencies to highlight the groups work (WFP, UNICEF)
 - Develop an inventory of current research questions to understand what the priorities for research should be going forward and better coordinate research (All)
 - e.g. Bioavailability of products, physiology, cohort data, non-communicable disease risk
 - Link between supply (operational questions)
 - Coordination of methodologies and approaches
 - Linking WHO guidelines with research priorities developed by groups like CORTASAM
 - Combined/simplified protocol research and evidence
 - Role of gut health and inflammation on micronutrient uptake and effectiveness of nutritious products
 - Gather information on shortfalls of RUTF in the field to understand bottlenecks (funding, operations, supply) and determine appropriate group to share this information with (ACF, UNICEF)

Points of Agreement

Areas for Ongoing Discussion

Workstream 3: Food Safety and Quality Assurance

- Temperature variation along the supply chain is something that needs to be reviewed
 - Especially for products provided via donation where the storage conditions and transport may not be documented or readily available
 - Agencies should continue to develop traceability and incident reporting feedback loops with a focus on generating data that can be aggregated to understand trends
 - Newer inter-agency members (ACF and ICRC) will participate in joint audits where relevant
 - Inter-Agency audit documents will be finalized by the end of August 2019
 - Aligning aflatoxin standards for SC and SC+ with RUSF
- Gathering information on Temperature/Storage Conditions throughout the supply chain including at the last mile in the beneficiary home (WFP, MSF, ACF, ICRC)
 - Based on results from gathering information on temperature/storage conditions adjusting requirements for stability studies based realistic field conditions (WFP, MSF, ACF, ICRC)
 - Need to develop further stability study data on products to inform prioritization/decision making on temperature controls (this is also valid for SC and SC+ products)
 - Review with manufacturers the fortification levels of micronutrients and raw ingredients
 - Comments on the salmonella investigation document will be shared with FAO and WHO (UNICEF, MSF)
 - Develop process capability indicators to be included in the harmonized auditing frame
 - Continued work on applying process capability approach when working with suppliers (USAID)
 - Developing a sampling plan used for testing nutrients at the manufacturer level
 - Developing a harmonized tool for tracing food safety and quality incidents (USAID, WFP)
 - WFP will share what they have developed with the other inter-agency members
 - Inter-agency members will seek external expertise to assess existing tools with the goal of improving current systems
 - SC: need for continued collaboration among the inter-agency group on production and quality of this product and packaging (WFP, USAID, ICRC)
 - A packaging workshop will be held at Michigan State University (MSU) in the fall with invitation to all inter-agency members (USAID)

	Points of Agreement	Areas for Ongoing Discussion
<p>Workstream 4: Inter-Agency Working Group Communications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-Agency members will develop and adopt a secretariat transition plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ideas include having a steering committee with representatives from each agency with a secretariat role that transitions every few years, finding an academic partner(s) for the steering committee to work with to host meetings ○ FAQR will develop a Secretariat Transition Manual • A shared file system should be developed on Share Point • The TOR for the group will be reviewed and revisited on a regular basis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inter-agency members to determine the review schedule at the next annual meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental considerations of packaging, reduction of plastics (ICRC, WFP) • Discuss if it would be relevant to implement Codex low moisture food standard for SC and SC+ (WFP, USAID) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ WFP will share standards developed with inter-agency • Create harmonized specifications for aflatoxin in SC and SC+ • Each agency will contribute more concrete feedback on the secretariat transition plan by the end of August 2019 (FAQR) • Developing use guidelines (permissions, what items to include etc.) for the shared agency file system (FAQR) • Continue efforts to involve WHO in annual meetings (All) • Finalize and implement secretariat transition plan (All)

Attending Organizations

- United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
- World Food Programme (WFP)
- United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)
- Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)
- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
- Action Against Hunger (ACF)
- Tufts University Food Aid Quality Review (FAQR) acting as Secretariat
- World Health Organization (WHO)

Plans for Next Meeting

Date: 26-28 May 2020

Location: WFP, Rome

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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